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INTERVENTION: BRITAIN, EGYPT, AND IRAQ DURING WORLD WAR II

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INTERVENTION: BRITAIN, EGYPT, AND IRAQ DURING WORLD WAR II

by

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For Ryan,
who saw this through from beginning to end,

and for Benjamin,
who joined us along the way.

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I'd like to recognize an individual and an experience that left their special imprint on the themes of this project. My grandmother Mary Ellis was an enthusiastic amateur historian. One day when I was sick as a child she sat on the edge of my bed and told me

our family history, just as her mother had done for her. She weaved together the many strands of the family tree, and made the ordinary extraordinary. From my grandmother I learned that history is, in the end, about people, and it is to her that I attribute my fascination with the personal stories behind the grand narrative.

I trace my interest in Embassies as institutions to an internship at the American Embassy in Tunis, Tunisia in 1999. While far removed in time and space from the British Embassies in this study, there are nonetheless some fascinating parallels. After spending a couple of months in an Embassy, observing and participating in the process of political reporting, I could better relate to the challenges facing the officials in this study and the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the modern diplomatic system.

During my years at the University of Texas I have come to appreciate the friendly, collegial environment of the Department of History. One of the joys of graduate school is the friendships that form in reading seminars, TA offices, and over endless cups of coffee. The other members of my dissertation writing group, Lauren Apter and Adrian Howkins, provided not only useful feedback on draft chapters, but even more importantly, moral support and encouragement. In my colleagues Maeve Cooney and Kristi Barnwell Wellman I have found life-long friends.

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Intervention: Britain, Egypt, and Iraq During World War II

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This comparative study examines the various forms of British intervention in Egypt and Iraq during World War II, and the nature of Britain's informal empire in the Middle East. The focus is on the British Embassies which served as the local point of contact between Britain and these two countries. Britain hoped to have, in the words of one Foreign Office official, a "quiet time" in the Middle East during World War II, and pursued an official policy of nonintervention in Egyptian and Iraqi internal affairs. Yet this status quo policy often conflicted with the parallel goal of maintaining Britain's prestige and influence in the region. In fact, the war saw an increased level of British involvement in the local affairs of both countries in the interest of the Allied war effort, culminating in the British military occupation of Iraq after the 1941 Rashid Ali coup, and the 1942 Abdin Palace incident in Egypt. This study also examines the development of

the Political Advisory system in Iraq and its role in the Mulla Mustafa Kurdish uprising from 1943-1945, the movement for Arab unity in Egypt and Iraq culminating in the 1945 founding of the Arab League, and the role that local intermediaries played in Britain's informal empire in these two countries. The local focus of this study highlights the complex motives of those who worked both for and against the British, moving beyond simplistic definitions of nationalists versus collaborators. While portrayed as a hegemonic power in the region, British influence and freedom of action was often limited due to the constraints of wartime. Local actors were able to use opportunities provided by the war to advance their own interests. World War II also served as incubator for the development and growth of movements that gained increasing significance in the post-war period.

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Abbreviations

Archival sources:

The National Archives (formerly Public Record Office), London:
FO Foreign Office

Middle East Centre Archive, St. Antony's College, Oxford:
Killearn Diaries. Diaries of Lord Killearn (Sir Miles Lampson)
Edmonds Diaries. Diaries of C.J. Edmonds
Edmonds Papers. Papers of C.J. Edmonds
Kinch Papers. Papers of E. Kinch.

Frequently cited documents
Hourani 1943 Report. Albert Hourani, "Great Britain and Arab Nationalism," June 1943, FO371/43958

Published sources:
Lampson Diaries. Yapp, Malcolm E., ed. *Politics and Diplomacy in Egypt: The Diaries of Sir Miles Lampson, 1935-1937*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1997.

Yapp Introduction. Yapp, Malcolm E., Introduction to *Politics and Diplomacy in Egypt: The Diaries of Sir Miles Lampson, 1935-1937*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1997.

Introduction

Rightly-judged the concept of empire is an elastic one. It is not just a matter of flags and the crown…and red on the map. In a wider sense Egypt is just as much part of our Empire as Nigeria or Malaya.

When we say that we have no territorial ambitions in this war we mean, or should mean, that we intend to think of our empire rather as a complex of mutual interests which embraces countries which do not fly the Union Jack. Just grabbing countries and sending them boatloads of administrators is a very primitive form of imperialism.

-- Major Evans-Pritchard, January 1944[1]

As the British political officer in Cyrenaica and famous post-war anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard explained, the British Empire was a complex and varied undertaking. This is perhaps nowhere more true than in the Middle East during the twentieth century, where Britain's imperial presence took every conceivable form: Palestine was a British Mandate, Iran was independent but under British economic influence through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, whereas Aden was under formal British control as a Crown Colony. From an administrative perspective, the Middle East lay at the center of the turf wars between the various departments of the British Government, with the Colonial Office, Foreign Office, and India Office all claiming authority over parts of the region, and often the same parts. There was nothing simple about Britain's presence in the Middle East.

Egypt and Iraq held a special position in this imperial mosaic. Both countries were crucial links in Britain's land-based lines of communication with India. The Suez Canal added to Egypt's importance, as did its strategic location on the eastern edge of the

[1] Paper by Major Evans-Pritchard of B.M.A. Cyrenaica, "A Note on the Place of Cyrenaica in the Arab World, and its future." Sent to Walter Smart by Norman Anderson, Civil Affairs Branch GHQ MEF, 3 Jan. 1944. FO141/944/115.

Mediterranean. Britain valued its influence in Iraq due to Iraq's own oil resources and its proximity to the oilfields of neighboring Iran.[2] Egypt and Iraq had been under formal British control during and immediately after World War I, but in the 1930s entered into treaty relations with Britain. The Anglo-Iraqi and Anglo-Egyptian Treaties recognized their "independence" while also preserving British influence.[3] Nationalists in both countries rightly believed that this independence was merely a façade for continued British intervention in local affairs.[4]

This study examines British policy in Egypt and Iraq at a particular historical moment: World War II. The war placed new demands on Britain's informal imperial network and on local collaborative governments in the Middle East.[5] As Indivar

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[2] For Egypt and Iraq's strategic importance to Britain in the inter-war period, see John Darwin, "An Undeclared Empire: The British in the Middle East, 1918-39," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 27:2 (1999): 159-176; Lawrence R. Pratt, *East of Malta, West of Suez: Britain's Mediterranean Crisis, 1936-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); and Martin Kolinsky, *Britain's War in the Middle East: Strategy and Diplomacy, 1936-42* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[3] Britain declared Egypt a Protectorate during World War I, while Iraq was administered as a British Mandate from 1920-1932. The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty was negotiated in 1936, while the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty was negotiated in 1930, and came into effect when Iraq was recognized as an independent state by the League of Nations in 1932. For an interesting comparison of Britain's relations with Egypt and Iraq during the interwar period of treaty negotiation, see Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1971*, new and revised edition (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981), 74-79.

[4] The assessments of two historians are useful in illustrating the complex motives behind Britain's signing of these treaties and the limitations on independence inherent within them. Elizabeth Monroe's comments on the Four Reserved Points imposed on Egypt after the Protectorate was ended in 1922 also apply to the 1936 treaty: "The essence of the disagreement was a question of trust; Britain mistrusted Egyptian ability to look after the Suez Canal, the Sudan, the rights of minorities and the defence of Egypt; the Egyptians wanted to be trusted with these matters, and contended that, short of that trust independence was a sham. And they had grounds for saying so, since the independence they were given amounted to independence to do right, but not independence to do wrong, in situations in which the sole arbiter of right and wrong was Great Britain." Monroe, 72. Charles Smith argues that "the British considered the treaty to be for their convenience to legitimize their intended presence, not as a promise of future concessions leading to British withdrawal and total independence, Egyptian expectations to the contrary." Charles D. Smith, "4 February 1942: Its Causes and Its Influence on Egyptian Politics and on the Future of Anglo-Egyptian Relations, 1937-1945," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10 (1979), 456.

[5] Steven Heydemann notes that the states of the Middle East were "indirect" participants in the war because their policies were "driven by the aims and interests of external colonial powers rather than local actors." Nevertheless, both world wars had a profound influence on the people and governments of the region, "creating new possibilities both for colonial intervention and for bargaining on the part of local

Kamtekar noted with respect to India during World War II, "the state's new burst of energy and activity" as it tried to meet these wartime demands "provides a flare of light enabling us to see its features more clearly."[6] The exceptional nature of the wartime context also highlights the tensions inherent in Britain's informal imperial relationship with Egypt and Iraq. The war proved to be a test to the system of "empire by treaty," the attempt by British officials to maintain their influence in Egypt and Iraq through the mechanism of treaties that recognized local independence, rather than through formal rule.[7] Britain was committed to maintaining the "informal" nature of this relationship during World War II. At the same time, Britain had vital wartime interests in both countries and protecting these interests was a paramount consideration in determining British policy.

While Britain's strategic interests in Egypt and Iraq remained the same throughout the war, the methods used to protect these interests did not. The comparative nature of this study highlights two important themes: the various forms of British intervention in the wartime Middle East, and the nature of Britain's informal empire in the region. The exigencies of wartime led Britain to intervene in Egyptian and Iraqi internal affairs at a level unprecedented since the signing of the treaties in the 1930s. At times, as in Iraq in 1941, this took the form of direct military intervention. At other times it was more subtle but no less (and perhaps even more) effective. The differences

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political actors." Steven Heydemann, ed., *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 10.

6 Indivar Kamtekar, "A Different War Dance: State and Class in India 1939-1945," *Past and Present* 176 (Aug. 2002): 189.

7 The phrase is taken from the title of a work by Matthew A. Fitzsimons, *Empire by Treaty: Britain and the Middle East in the Twentieth Century* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964).

between these two states should not be overlooked, yet by examining the similarities in their wartime experiences it is possible to explore the complex methods and motives of British intervention in an informal imperial context.

Britain's freedom of action to impose its demands on Egypt and Iraq faced two serious limitations during World War II: wartime constraints, and growing local nationalist demands. Britain did not always have the manpower, money, or supplies available to impose its will on Egypt and Iraq, particularly during the difficult early years of the war. These constraints forced British officials to reconsider the nature of Britain's informal empire in the region. Informal imperial influence relies on a degree of local cooperation, yet the local elites who were willing to collaborate with Britain during the war were viewed as conservative and corrupt. The governments of both Egypt and Iraq came under increasing pressure from local opposition movements and the British to institute widespread social and economic reform, encourage the participation of younger Egyptians and Iraqis in politics, and move away from the vested interests that supported them. This tension resulted in discussions within the British Embassies in Egypt and Iraq regarding the extent of Britain's responsibility to ensure "good governance."[8] These debates reveal the complexities of informal empire on the local level. Indirect methods of influence made fiscal and strategic sense on the grand scale of imperial policy, but presented certain difficulties to the local British officials who oversaw their implementation on a day-to-day basis.

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[8] Reflecting British preoccupation with this concept during the interwar years and World War II, Monroe titled her chapter on this period "The Years of Good Management." Monroe, chapter 3.

Intervention in an informal imperial context of necessity took place behind the scenes. The role of the British Embassies in Cairo and Baghdad as the locus for this activity serves as the third point of emphasis in this study. These Embassies and their subsidiary organizations were not just buildings, or simply outposts of the Foreign Office, but "institutions" with their own power structure, traditions and protocol. While they fell under the supervision of the Foreign Office, they also exerted their own sphere of influence locally in the Middle East. During World War II they were engaged in an on-going struggle to preserve this sphere of influence. The challenge to their authority came not only from local nationalist demands for less foreign meddling in internal affairs, but also from the many other British wartime organizations in the Middle East, such as the military, the Ministry of Information, the Minister of State, and the Government of India. It is useful to look at the inner workings of this institution because it reveals the ways in which British intervention was enacted "on the spot."

This emphasis on the Embassies themselves moves attention away from the decision-making process in London and the larger regional objectives of the Foreign Office. Rather, the focus is on policy-making at the "input" level of the Embassies and their direct contacts with local leaders. Christopher Bayly, in his study of intelligence networks in India during the nineteenth century, notes that "The meeting between British and Indian agencies was riven by suspicion, distortion and violence. For here, at the point of intersection between political intelligence and indigenous knowledge, colonial rule was at its most vulnerable."[9] This observation is also true of British intelligence-

9 C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

gathering mechanisms in a different time and place, the Middle East during World War II. The Oriental Secretariat at the British Embassies in Egypt and Iraq served as the main apparatus for British contact with local leaders. The officials who staffed this section were regarded as the British experts on the finer points of internal politics, with vast local information networks. Focusing on these officials in the Embassies and their contacts highlights this "point of intersection" and the strengths and weaknesses of the British information-gathering system in different environments.

The localized focus of this study adds transparency to the process of the production of imperial knowledge within an informal context. One can trace information about local developments in Egypt and Iraq starting with the "input" level: police reports that crossed the desk of the Oriental Counsellor in Egypt or conversations he had with important local intermediaries, or political gossip that the British Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior of Iraq gleaned from meetings with local leaders. The Embassy records include not only this "raw data," but the assessments of these officials and the reports the Ambassadors then sent on to London. The internal comments of the Embassy staff reveal how British officials "on the spot" often framed their reports in a way that would provoke a particular response from London, either spurring London on to greater action or assuaging fears of local unrest. Reports then moved from the local clearinghouse of the Embassies to the Foreign Office. One can then examine how these reports were dealt with on the receiving end and how suggestions from the Embassies fit into Britain's larger imperial strategy. By placing these two sets of records together, it is often possible to follow a particular issue from the Oriental Counsellor's off-the-record conversations all the way through to Prime Minister Churchill's own response. This vertical analysis of

Britain's information and analysis network sheds light on the strengths and weaknesses of the British information-gathering system in different environments, with the Embassies serving as Bayly's "point of intersection" in the context of Britain's informal empire in Egypt and Iraq. It reveals the competing interests within Britain's diplomatic structure: the localized, long-term focus of the Oriental Counsellor, the short-term focus of the Ambassador with the aim of maintaining Britain's position during the war, and the wider perspective of the Foreign Office, as well as the tension between British military and civilian authorities. Examining the points of disagreement between officials both in the Embassies and in London, challenges the idea of a monolithic British "official mind."

Imperial intervention, particularly within the context of informal empire, was of necessity a two way street. It required the active cooperation of local officials to succeed. At the same time the limitations Britain faced in imposing its will provided room for Egyptian and Iraqi officials to negotiate in their own, and their countries', best interests. In fact, British intervention was not always unwelcome; it could be appropriated as a means of leverage in internal political struggles. The concept of patron-client networks is useful in assessing the Oriental Secretariat's relations with local leaders.[10] Studying these contacts within this framework reveals that this strong reliance on local cooperation and sources of information was often a mutually beneficial arrangement. It offered room for local officials to influence British policy from the input level depending on the types of

[10] This concept is discussed at length in Chapter 2, drawing on two different theoretical approaches: Ronald Robinson's theory of collaboration, as outlined in his 1972 essay, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration", reprinted in Wm. Roger Louis, ed., *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976) and Colin Newbury's assessment of patron-client relations within the colonial context in *Patrons, Clients, and Empire: Chieftaincy and Over-rule in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

information they provided and how they portrayed the internal political environment. At the same time, these cooperative arrangements ultimately proved to be mutually destructive, as Britain found itself tied to conservative, reactionary interests in both countries and British "clients" lost popularity and political support due to their close ties to Britain. This approach complicates not only the view of Britain as a hegemonic power in the region during World War II, but also challenges the simplistic dichotomy between local collaborators and nationalists. Placing these complex relationships within the framework of patron-client networks reveals that these connections provided both opportunities for concessions and responsibilities of their own.

The most famous episodes of British intervention in Iraq and Egypt during World War II are the 1941 British military occupation of Iraq after the Rashid Ali Coup, and the 1942 Abdin Palace Incident in Egypt. These events were highly significant, both as short-term solutions to Britain's wartime challenges in both countries, and for their deep long-term influence in Egyptian and Iraqi public memory. Yet just as significant were the numerous acts of British intervention behind the scenes in the period leading up to and following these dramatic events. An examination of these different forms of intervention highlights the evolving nature of Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Iraqi relations as a result of the ebb and flow of the war and the shifting bases of internal power politics.

When war broke out in September 1939, Britain hoped to have "a quiet time" in the region, maintaining a status quo policy: as long as the British received cooperation on vital war requirements they would avoid overt interference in internal affairs. As one Foreign Office official explained in 1940: "It has been our aim, while persuading the

Egyptian Government to co-operate in giving effect to all essential war measures, to avoid a situation arising which might necessitate the use of British forces for the maintenance of internal order…this would be extremely unpopular."[11] Britain pursued this same policy with respect to the Iraqi Government. The British treaties with both Egypt and Iraq seemed to provide the perfect framework for Britain to legally make demands of both countries. The declaration of war debates in both Egypt and Iraq offer a useful case study of British intervention by treaty and of the balancing act Britain tried to maintain between stability in the region and avoiding active intervention. It also highlights the room that Britain's status quo policy unwittingly provided for local officials to avoid unattractive commitments.

Intervention through the mechanism of the treaty proved to be insufficient to meet British demands with the advent to power of Rashid Ali in Iraq and Ali Maher in Egypt. Both Prime Minister were, in Britain's view, obstructionist and anti-British: they were Britain's "Public Enemy No. 1" in their respective countries.[12] British officials actively tried to remove them from power, and the continued role of these leaders in local politics contributed to direct British intervention in both countries. As a result of the British military occupation of Iraq in 1941 and the Abdin Palace Incident in Egypt in 1942 these hostile leaders were replaced with pro-British governments, in Iraq led by Nuri as-Said and in Egypt by Mustafa al-Nahas.

With pro-British governments in power, British officials encountered new challenges. Both governments faced charges of corruption and inefficiency and came to

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[11] Minute by Thompson, 29 Dec. 1940, FO371/27549.

[12] Minute by Kelly, 28 Feb. 1939, FO 371/23304.

be regarded, both by local citizens and the British themselves, as conservative and reactionary forces. A parallel debate within the British Embassies ensued that reflected the divisions among British officials: was it better for Britain to have a friendly yet corrupt Iraq, or a well-run but hostile Iraq? For the British this dichotomy was self-evident and the two options mutually exclusive. The debate and the conclusions reached reflect British priorities and the continued influence of the Mandate mentality among British officials serving in Iraq during World War II. In Egypt, after Nahas's government became involved in a number of serious corruption scandals, the British faced a similar dilemma. The British Ambassador to Iraq, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, proposed administrative reform as the solution, while the British Ambassador to Egypt, Sir Miles Lampson, supported a show of British force. Both policies faced great opposition from officials within the Embassies and in London.

Nationalism is an underlying theme throughout this study. The methods by which Nuri and Nahas came to power, by "British bayonets" as one Egyptian leader described it, presented problems to both Prime Ministers. They actively tried to bolster their nationalist credentials as a means of deflecting attention from their active cooperation with Britain. The movement for Arab Unity served as a useful platform for both men to do so. The way in which this movement took shape in the later war years, culminating in the formation of the Arab League in 1945, demonstrates how nationalism could be a useful tool for local leaders trying to win popular support. Nuri's efforts to promote Iraq as the leader of the Arab nationalist movement faced a serious internal challenge in the later war years: a Kurdish uprising. The Mulla Mustafa revolt of 1943-1945 threatened both Nuri's government and Britain's strategic interests in Iraq.

Britain was successful in achieving its wartime aims for Egypt and Iraq, but the end of the war presented new challenges. Both countries called for post-war treaty revision and less British interference in internal administration. At the same time, Britain was reassessing its strategic priorities. The changing realities of the post-war environment called for new forms of British influence using technical advisers, development projects, and equal relationships. Yet as historian W.R. Louis explained, "Non-intervention and 'partnership' thus may be regarded as an alternative means of preserving British power."[13] The end of the war only enhanced Egypt and Iraq's importance within Britain's strategic framework, but it forced Britain to reassess the means by which it ensured that they remained within the British orbit.

The Middle East did not merely serve as a battleground for the Allied and Axis powers to fight on, nor is the history of the war in the region just a military history. The war had a deep and lasting influence on local governments, nationalist movements, and the life of the people themselves. It served as an incubator for the emergence of new social and political forces in both Egypt and Iraq that would take on greater significance in the post-war world. The main acts of British intervention during 1941-1942 in these two countries were short-term solutions to wartime crises, but they had a long-term negative effect on how local populations and political leaders viewed the British. Anglo-Iraqi and Anglo-Egyptian relations were transformed by the events of World War II.

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13 Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), vii.

PART I: BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN EGYPT AND IRAQ: MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO, 1939-1940

Chapter 1: British Embassies and Diplomatic Structure

The British Embassies in Egypt and Iraq during World War II were more than just buildings that housed diplomatic outposts, they were also strong visual symbols of British prestige and influence in the Middle East. Both countries were officially independent states, but the Arab public still considered the British to be a powerful force behind the local monarch and government. The Embassy buildings reminded the local population of the period of British formal control in each country: in Egypt the 1882 occupation and the declaration of a Protectorate during World War I and in Iraq the British Mandate from 1920-1932. In 1932 in Iraq and 1936 in Egypt the British Residency became an Embassy. The High Commissioner was given the new title of Ambassador, in recognition of the fact that Britain was now dealing with these two countries as sovereign nations. Yet this change was in many ways symbolic and superficial, and the British Embassies continued to exert great influence in both countries.

Historian Avi Shlaim, in his study of the British Foreign Secretaries, distinguishes between the "psychological environment" and the "operational environment" of these officials, borrowing terminology from the discipline of political science. The first refers to the "beliefs and images" that officials bring to their role as policy-makers, while the second refers to the organization within which they function: "Policy formulation by the foreign secretary cannot be separated from the organisational setting in which he

operates. The machinery of which he is in charge is not a passive piece of apparatus but has its own traditions, preferences, functions, rules and patterns of interaction, all of which play an important role in the decision-making process."[1] This distinction is also useful in assessing the British officials working in the Embassies: what assumptions and experiences informed their policy-making decisions, and how did the institutional structure of the Embassies themselves shape the ways in which they gathered and assessed information and then reported their findings back to London? An examination of British diplomatic representation in Egypt and Iraq from this perspective makes it clear that, while entrenched in protocol and tradition, Embassies are not static entities. They were constantly changing as personnel were sent out from the Foreign Office, new departments or organizational structures were formed to deal with developing issues, and as new technology sped up communications with officials at home in London. Embassies are dynamic institutions with their own interests and spheres of influence, and a "personality" largely determined by that of the Ambassador.

The British Embassy in Egypt, located on the banks of the Nile in the heart of Cairo, had a large staff on the eve of World War II, and it grew during the war with the battle raging in the Western Desert. In the midst of the wartime whirlwind of activity in Egypt's capital, the British Embassy projected the image of a bastion of stability, in large part due to the dominating personality of the Ambassador. Sir Miles Lampson (after 1943

[1] Avi Shlaim, Peter Jones, and Keith Sainsbury, *British Foreign Secretaries since 1945* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1977), 19. Avi Shlaim wrote the introductory chapter on the office of Foreign Secretary as well as the chapters on Anthony Eden and Ernest Bevin and they are of particular value to this study due to his position as a prominent historian of the Middle East.

Lord Killearn) held this post from 1934 until 1946, first as High Commissioner and after 1936 as Ambassador.[2] In his biographical sketch of Lampson, Malcolm Yapp describes him, on a personal level, as "a pragmatic conservative and by nature an optimist. He was no intellectual…"[3] He enjoyed shooting, horse racing, and entertaining; his diaries are filled with detailed lists of dinner party guests and shooting results alongside reports of diplomatic and political developments. In 1934 he married his second wife, Jacqueline Castellani. She was only 18 years old at the time, and found herself in the formidable position of serving as hostess at one of the largest British Embassies in the world, one that paid particular attention to issues of protocol and precedence and carried a demanding entertainment schedule. Yet by all accounts she fulfilled her new position successfully.[4]

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[2] Lampson came from an Anglo-Scots family, attended Eton, and in 1903 joined the Foreign Office. Most of his career prior to his posting in Egypt was spent in East Asia, where from 1926 until 1933 he served as Minister to Peking. After his tour in Egypt, Lampson was appointed Special Commissioner to South East Asia. He retired in 1948, and died in 1964. Malcolm E. Yapp, Introduction to *Politics and Diplomacy in Egypt: The Diaries of Sir Miles Lampson, 1935-1937* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1997). Lampson kept a detailed diary throughout his time in China and Egypt, in which he recorded not only his personal reflections on local politics and his decision-making process but also notes of personal discussions with major figures in Egyptian politics. The manuscript diaries are housed at the Middle East Centre Archive at St. Antony's College, Oxford and are particularly useful as a glimpse into the workings of the British Embassy for the period for which the Embassy records were destroyed (1930-1941). There are two published collections drawn from Lampson's diaries: Trefor Ellis Evans, ed. *The Killearn diaries, 1934-1946: The Diplomatic and Personal Record of Lord Killearn (Sir Miles Lampson), High Commissioner and Ambassador, Egypt* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972) provides selected heavily edited diary entries covering Lampson's entire career in Egypt, while Malcolm E. Yapp, ed. *Politics and Diplomacy in Egypt: The Diaries of Sir Miles Lampson, 1935-1937,* focuses exclusively on Lampson's early years in Egypt and the negotiations leading up to the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty with minimal editing. Yapp's introduction is valuable in providing the context for the diaries and insight into the structure of the British Embassy in Egypt during the 1930s.

[3] Yapp Introduction, 5.

[4] Artemis Cooper noted "She was energetic and bossy, both excellent qualities in a diplomat's wife; and she also had the invaluable gift of being able to talk confidently and brightly to everyone, from the King to Tommy Atkins." Artemis Cooper, *Cairo in the War 1939-1945* (Hamish Hamilton, 1989; reprint, London: Penguin Books, 1995), 60.

The Ambassador's 1942 showdown with the King of Egypt earned him "a reputation as a hard man," which endeared him to Winston Churchill, who even toyed with the idea of appointing him as Viceroy to India so that he could use his techniques there.[5] Yet as Yapp points out, this reputation oversimplified the career of an astute and gifted diplomatist. Lampson was the main negotiator on the British side for the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty which gave Egypt greater independence, and he oversaw the transition of Britain's power in Egypt from the formal influence of the Residency to the informal influence of the Embassy. Despite these changes, Lampson privately believed that Egypt needed to retain its close ties to Britain and should eventually be permanently incorporated into the British Empire. He admitted that the Treaty had worked "not too badly," yet he also wrote that "it has always remained at the back of my mind that if Egypt ratted on the Treaty, or let us down, we should almost certainly have to proceed to the next phase in Anglo-Egyptian relations, in short, that the Treaty phase would only have been a passing chapter in the evolution of our relations."[6] It is significant that Lampson, the man-on-the-spot most responsible for implementing the treaty and British policy and dealing with Egypt as an independent nation, felt in his heart that Egypt belonged permanently within the framework of the British Empire.

While Egyptian nationalists often argued that the 1936 Treaty gave Egypt independence in name only, from Lampson's perspective, his transition from High

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[5] Yapp Introduction, 6. For Lampson's own views on this, see Killearn Diaries, 2 Dec. 1942.

[6] Killearn Diaries, 30 May 1940. This was a long-held view of Lampson's, first stated soon after his arrival in Egypt in 1934 and repeated again in 1943, although in 1943 he stated that it was not "practical politics" as even suggesting it would "provoke an immediate nationalist explosion of the most violent kind." Yet he believed that it would "prove the ideal long-term solution of the Anglo-Egyptian problem," particularly if the initiative "came spontaneously from within." Lampson to FO, 22 March 1943, FO141/855.

Commissioner to Ambassador had real implications for his position and prestige, limiting his ability to place pressure on the King or the Egyptian Government: "What was formerly recognised by all, including the Egyptian public, as perfectly normal and legitimate is different now. Egypt is independent and Farouk is very much the first independent King of an independent Egypt."[7] Because of Egyptian sensitivities towards preserving the country's independence and the King's desire to be treated like the monarch of any other sovereign nation in relations with Britain, Lampson felt that it would be improper and counterproductive for him to request frequent interviews with the King unless there was a clear reason for doing so. The general public still believed that Britain was the power behind the government and the throne. Too frequent interviews would only reinforce this perception of "England as the legendary Deus ex Machina, who, in spite of treaty fictions, is still confidently believed to be able to exercise decisive influence in these directions."[8] As a result, Lampson's personal style of diplomacy centered on the principle of using indirect contacts to influence the King and Prime Minister in order to avoid reinforcing the popularly held assumption that the British Ambassador was calling the shots.

Yet Lampson also had a more personal reason for relying on indirect contacts. He was concerned that he might initiate action in Egypt in response to a crisis only to find that he did not have Foreign Office backing, which would be an affront to his own reputation and British prestige in general. It is evident from Lampson's personal diaries and his correspondence with the Foreign Office that this was a constant fear in the back

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[7] Lampson to Oliphant, 6 Jan. 1939, FO 371/23304.

[8] Lampson to Halifax, 3 Feb. 1939, FO 371/23304.

of his mind. It was founded on his experience in China, when the Foreign Office had refused to back him up on a crucial decision. The British concession at Hankow was invaded by the Chinese and the British Government ignored Lampson's calls for the use of force in retaliation, reaching a compromise agreement with Chinese nationalists instead.[9] In a 1934 diary entry, made soon after his arrival in Egypt, he described his response to an event in Egypt on which he felt he must take a firm stand and referred back to this experience in China: "The F.O., I am glad to say, are taking quite a firm line, but I wish that I was a little more convinced that they would stick to their guns if and when there is a row! Ever since they let me down so badly over Han Kow in 1927, I am never entirely at ease in my mind in cases of this kind."[10] Working indirectly through intermediaries, Lampson was able to make policy suggestions and demands without necessarily having the force to back them up. He believed that by avoiding the public appearance of direct intervention in the day to day operations of the Government of Egypt or the Palace, he was maintaining the façade of nonintervention. Despite these efforts, Egyptian officialdom remained convinced that he was the real power behind both throne and government.

One of Lampson's most important duties was maintaining contact with the Palace. King Farouk was only 16 when his father died in 1936, so a regency council was set up until Farouk came of age in 1937.[11] Even after Farouk assumed the throne, Lampson continued to regard him as a young, impressionable boy, in need of guidance and advice.

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9 Yapp Introduction, *Politics and Diplomacy in Egypt*, 4-5. For Lampson's years in China, see Edmund S.K. Fung, *The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat: Britain's South China Policy, 1924-1931* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

10 Killearn Diaries, 29 April 1934.

His approach to the king was that of a wise yet patronizing older man imparting his knowledge and wisdom to the younger generation, rather than that of a senior diplomat speaking to a head of state. Lampson frequently called Farouk "the boy," while Farouk referred to him as "Professor Lampson."[12] Throughout his time in Egypt, Lampson vacillated between a strongly held conviction that Farouk must go, and a hope that "the boy may yet make good."[13]

The relationship between the two men was always strained. They never developed the kind of easy, personal relationship that the Foreign Office hoped for. A constant refrain in Foreign Office minutes and telegrams during Lampson's tenure in Cairo was the need for the Ambassador to see the King more frequently. Lampson disagreed as he believed that the treaty had increased the King's sensitivity about appearing to be under the influence of anyone, let alone the British Ambassador, and that he should not see him more than necessary.

In Lampson's opinion, better relations with Egypt lay not in more frequent social visits to the King, as the Foreign Office suggested, but in real shows of British power and prestige that could not be ignored and would reinforce British demands. He observed: "A youthful and headstrong Oriental potentate can in the end only be swayed by considerations of force. It lies with us so to strengthen our position in the Eastern

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[11] Lampson Diaries, 535 (8 May 1936).

[12] Minute by Norton, 23 Feb. 1940, FO 371/24623. Even when they were on good terms, there was a tone of condescension in Lampson's reports on visits with the King. As Grafftey-Smith observed, "the same six-foot-five of British officialdom who had given Farouq those boring books and, perhaps, patronised him as a child…still represented Britain…No sensitive young man cares to be reminded, even by his own memory, of the day a visitor knows that he has wet his trousers…" Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant* (London: John Murray, 1970), 233.

[13] Lampson to Oliphant, 15 Feb. 1939, FO 371/23304.

Mediterranean that neither King Farouk nor his entourage can have any doubt of our power to defend Egypt, and, if necessary, to force her rulers to comply with our wishes."[14] However, the demands of wartime meant that military resources were already spread thin, and it was not always possible for the military to make available the manpower needed to use force if necessary. Despite the many events which caused Lampson to threaten the use of force during World War II the closest the British came to following through on this threat was during the Abdin Palace incident of February 1942. The more common response was one of compromise, such as occurred during the summer 1940 crisis over Ali Maher's Government.[15]

The British Embassy in Iraq was fairly weak at the beginning of the war. It still had a significant influence over local politics, but the Ambassadors during this period were mostly political appointments and "lightweights." It was, as one British official put it, "a dynasty of professional puppets."[16] Unlike Lampson in Egypt, British Ambassadors in Iraq came and went frequently, depriving the Embassy of stability in leadership. Between 1933 and 1940 there were four different British Ambassadors to Iraq. The rest of the Embassy staff changed frequently as well. A Foreign Office official noted that within a year of leaving Iraq in 1936, he found that the entire staff had turned over at the

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[14] Lampson to Halifax, 3 Feb. 1939, FO 371/23304.

[15] See chapter 5.

[16] D.K. Fieldhouse, ed., *Kurds, Arabs and Britons: The Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq 1918-44* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 370. The above comment was omitted from the published version, but was included in the original manuscript at St. Antony's College, Oxford.

Embassy, with the exception of the Oriental Secretary.[17] While the Oriental Secretary and British advisers in the Iraqi Government provided a sense of continuity, the Embassy was at a real disadvantage due to this high turnover rate, particularly given the importance the British placed on maintaining personal contacts as a means of influencing local politics. One of the advisers noted that the Embassy suffered due to a lack of staff with real experience in the Middle East and deep local knowledge.[18] The situation was made even more acute because in the same period Germany was represented by a Minister, Fritz Grobba, who in contrast to most of the British Ambassadors to Iraq was a Middle East specialist with an extensive local propaganda network.[19]

In May 1939 Sir Basil Newton arrived in Baghdad as the new Ambassador. Newton was a career diplomat, whose postings spanned many regions. [20] He had served with Lampson in China, spent the early 1930s at the Embassy in Berlin, and then came to Iraq from a post in Prague. Baghdad was his first post in the Middle East, and his first as Ambassador.[21] Newton was viewed as a competent diplomat but his lack of experience in the Middle East proved to be a real weakness. C.J. Edmonds, a British adviser in Iraq, felt

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17 Minute by Crosthwaite, 7 Feb. 1940, FO 371/24559. The Oriental Secretariat in Egypt and Iraq advised the Ambassador on local politics. The Oriental Secretaries were valued for their knowledge of local languages and personalities, and were also involved in intelligence gathering and assessment and influencing the local press. They are discussed at length in Chapter 2.

18 McDougall to Baggallay, 7 Jan. 1940, FO 624/19.

19 For the German presence in Iraq see Edgar Flacker, *Fritz Grobba and Nazi Germany's Middle Eastern Policy 1933-1942* (D. Phil. Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, 1998).

20 Newton's personality comes through in comments made by his colleagues. Newton visited Lampson in Cairo on his way to his new post in Baghdad in 1939, and Lampson observed that he had not changed much since they had worked together in China: "A little balder on top and a little more solid and, shall I say, possibly pompous?" Killearn Diaries, 8 May 1939. Reader Bullard, the British Minister to Iran, described Newton as "a bachelor with a considerable private fortune, and very fussy." Letter dated 16 February 1941, in Reader Bullard, *Letters from Tehran: A British Ambassador in World War II Persia*, Edited by E.C. Hodgkin (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 1991), 42.

that Newton was too brusque in dealing with Iraqi leaders, brushing aside their concerns. In his estimation, Newton's "precise…mentality is quite unadapted to understanding the working of the Oriental mind."[22] Yet Newton showed a real understanding of the situation in Iraq and the danger presented by German agents in the country when he called for British troops to be sent to Iraq in the summer of 1940. In the fall of 1940 the Foreign Office considered replacing Newton due to Britain's deteriorating position in Iraq. A British official noted that the new Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, "…feels that no blame should be attached to him [Newton] for the position which has arisen in Iraq, which is due to causes outside the Amb.'s control. A more forceful character might perhaps be able to make more of a very difficult situation."[23]

The Foreign Office found the "more forceful character" and the experience they were looking for in Sir Kinahan Cornwallis.[24] The Colonial Secretary, Lord Lloyd, strongly supported this appointment, observing that Cornwallis "struck me as being in the

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[21] FO list, 1946.

[22] Edmonds Diaries, 6 Sept. 1939.

[23] Minute by Seymour, 7 Jan. 1941, FO371/24626.

[24] Cornwallis was born in New York to an American mother and British father. Cornwallis had, as Leslie McLoughlin states, "almost the perfect CV for a top-level policy adviser," having attended Haileybury and then Oxford. He joined the Sudan Civil Service and then worked for the Government of Egypt. In 1915 he joined the staff of the Arab Bureau, in 1916 becoming its director. This position put him right at the center of planning for the Arab Revolt and the post-war Middle East. In 1919 he was appointed Political Officer with the Egyptian expeditionary force to occupied Syria, where he developed a close relationship with Feisal, then King of Syria. He left Syria for Iraq to serve as Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior of the new Government of Iraq from 1921 until 1935, and as personal adviser to King Feisal of Iraq. He retired in 1935, but with the outbreak of World War II he reentered government service as a member of the Middle East division of the Ministry of Information in London. He served as Ambassador to Iraq from 1941 until March 1945, and after a short period at the Foreign Office he retired again in 1946. Leslie McLoughlin, *In a Sea of Knowledge: British Arabists in the Twentieth Century* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2002), 51-52 and H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 13 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v. "Cornwallis, Sir Kinahan," by Martin Burton. For Cornwallis's career with the Arab Bureau, see Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East, 1916-1920* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press,

full tide of his vigour mentally and physically, and as to his knowledge of the country there is, of course, no question. He is a first-rate Arabic scholar and is very much in possession of the respect of the Iraqis. Most especially could we rely upon him if there were any trouble in that country."[25] In a post where personalities were considered to be the most crucial factor in politics and diplomacy, Cornwallis's extensive personal contacts were seen as a real benefit.

While Lampson and Newton rose to the post of Ambassador through a traditional diplomatic career, Cornwallis's career was characterized by administrative service within local governments, beginning in the Sudan. By gaining experience in Iraq as an employee of the Government of Iraq, he developed an extensive network of personal contacts and an intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the various Ministries, which served him well as Ambassador. He was an area expert in his own right, comfortable with the Arabic language and familiar with Iraqi culture. However, as one Foreign Office official noted, during his long stay in Iraq he not only had a chance to make lots of useful contacts, but "he must be assumed to have made some enemies there."[26] He had, indeed, made a powerful enemy in Rashid Ali, who was partly responsible for Cornwallis's departure from Iraq in 1935.[27] This enmity was particularly important given the fact that soon after

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1992). According to Elizabeth Monroe, "Cornwallis took special measures not to leave private papers behind." Westrate, 212 n. 19.

[25] Lloyd to Cadogan, 2 Dec. 1940, FO 371/24549.

[26] Minute by Seymour to Cadogan, 21 Nov 1940, FO 371/24549.

[27] Edmonds, the Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, noted in April 1941, after a talk with the Ambassador, that "Cornwallis recalled R.A.'s treatment of himself in 1935 as an instance of R.A.'s duplicity. I hope he is not going to let the personal resentment influence his policy." Edmonds Diaries, April 7, 1941.

Cornwallis's arrival Rashid Ali became Prime Minister once again through a military coup.

Other British organizations in the Middle East

Traditionally the British Embassy in Cairo was the unquestioned British voice in Egypt. The outbreak of war in 1939 brought a new challenge to the prestige and power of the Embassy. Britain already had military troops in Egypt under the provisions of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, but the war led to an explosion in Britain's military presence, as British military authorities and intelligence organizations flocked to Cairo to set up office.[28] Lampson was keenly sensitive to any attempt to override the authority of the Embassy. Cairo served as headquarters for the Commander in Chief, Middle East and Lampson and General Wavell clashed almost immediately. While Lampson was highly complementary of General Wilson, the General Officer Commanding British Troops in Egypt, he and Wavell were frequently at odds over what Lampson considered to be the military's attempts to influence policy and civilian matters that were under the authority of the Embassy and the Foreign Office. Lampson complained that the "tendency on Wavell's part to ride rough-shod over political considerations should be checked… Otherwise the military (not Gen. Wilson because he is quite a different stamp) will come to look upon us as nothing but a rubber-stamp."[29] Lampson also lamented what he

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[28] To give a sense of the scope of Britain's military presence n Egypt, the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty allowed Britain to maintain 10,000 troops in peacetime. By the end of World War II British troops in Egypt exceeded 250,000. Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951*, 125.

[29] Killearn Diaries, 14 Sept. 1939. Lampson was generally critical of Wavell, ignoring the real challenges that the C in C, Middle East faced during the early years of the war. It is useful to balance the diplomatic record with some of the military assessments of the same period. For a more sympathetic account of Wavell, see John Connell, *Wavell: Scholar and Soldier to June 1941* (London: Collins, 1964).

described as the military's "acquisitive tendencies," as he felt they were trying to take over political and propaganda responsibilities from the Embassy.[30] Foreign Office staff shared this frustration with the arrival of military staff in Egypt "descending upon Egypt like the locusts of old" and interfering in local politics.[31]

Lampson's insistence on having the option of using force to back up his requests to King Farouk was a cause of tension between the Embassy and British military authorities. In his diary he complained that Wavell insisted that troops were not available in the case of Iraq and Syria in 1941, when in fact they were able to find some when it was absolutely necessary. Lampson observed that while he agreed that they should not weaken their defenses in the West, "I am learning by experience that when the military say categorically (as they have done on many occasions) that troops, transport, etc. are not available, experience proves that in fact if the issue is pressed something is usually forthcoming. The technique of the military, and especially of Wavell, is to announce dogmatically that such and such can't be done." Lampson found that if he applied enough pressure and got the Foreign Office on his side to apply pressure in London as well, the troops could usually be found.[32]

In 1941 the British Ambassador in Egypt faced a new source of competition for political influence in Cairo. Given the growing complexity of Britain's war effort in the Middle East, and the need to coordinate information and decision-making throughout the region, the British contemplated the creation of a new position of Minister of State,

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30 Killearn Diaries, 13 March 1941.

31 Minute by Thompson, 24 Nov. 1939, FO 371/23307.

Middle East. The holder of this position would also have a seat in the War Cabinet and be based in Cairo. As Lampson described it, they needed a "super-man to take charge of policy in the Middle East...it amounts in fact to the appointment of a political Commander-in-Chief, Middle East...What we really want is a sort of Viceroy of the Middle East."[33] Lampson was generally jealous of any attempt to infringe on the Embassy's territory, but he was supportive of the creation of this new position, and the first appointee, Oliver Lyttleton.[34] After Lyttleton's first meeting with Lampson and the heads of services in Egypt, Lampson recorded his "…admiration of the tact and at the same time firmness with which O.L. presides over the meetings...he has already succeeded in hitching things up to a quite remarkable extent and that he has also been able to bring the three Service Chiefs in behind him too with consummate skill."[35]

All of these new British voices in Cairo provided opportunities to Egyptian leaders who attempted to play various groups off of each other in a game of divide and conquer. Ali Maher, as Chef du Cabinet and later as Prime Minister, was adept at using the Egyptian Ambassador in London to try and undermine Lampson's influence back at home, but the presence of so many new British officials provided new opportunities in Cairo. Turf wars developed between the Publicity Section at the Embassy and the propaganda organizations attached to the Minister of State's office and the British army,

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[32] Killearn Diaries, 18 May 1941. A good example of this was in 1943 during the Black Book affair, which is discussed in Chapter 7, when Lampson was able to get London to approve the use of force if necessary against the opposition of the service chiefs in Cairo. See Killearn Diaries, April-May 1943.

[33] Killearn Diaries, 17 April 1941.

[34] Two Ministers of State discuss their time in Cairo in their memoirs: Oliver Lyttelton, Viscount Chandos, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London: The Bodley Head, 1962) and Lord Richard Casey, *Personal Experience 1939-1946* (New York: David McKay Company, 1962). On Lyttelton, see also Simon Ball, *The Guardsmen: Harold Macmillan, Three Friends, and the World They Made* (London: HarperCollins, 2004).

and between the Embassy and military intelligence for influence over political decisions in London. Another Prime Minister, Nahas Pasha, was also skilled at this strategy, suggesting to Lampson, in the midst of a serious Government crisis when Britain was contemplating removing its support for his government, that

> He suspected that the British Government no longer acted on the advice of the Embassy. He made the direct charge that there were many others in Egypt and in Cairo whose advice was now preferred in London to that of the Ambassador. There was the Minister of State, there were this, that and the other, and especially there were the British military who played an independent line.[36]

In this instance, Lampson took the bait, noting in his diary that "I am not entirely convinced that there may not be just a little something in it…our soldiers are always a little inclined to rush in just a trifle unwisely or to do things which can be so easily misinterpreted in a place like this."[37] The struggle to retain London's ear against competing voices would preoccupy the British Embassies in both Egypt and Iraq throughout the war.

The Foreign Office

All British representatives had to deal with the Foreign Office in London, the hub of British foreign policy decision making. Foreign Office decisions took precedence over the views and opinions of the local representatives, and the Foreign Office perspective served as a useful counter-balance to the more narrow focus of Embassy staff. The Foreign Office also supplied most of the Embassy staff, in particular that of the Chancery. Each Ambassador was assisted by a Counsellor and a varying number of Secretaries from the Diplomatic Service who staffed the Chancery, which Trefor-Evans

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35 Killearn Diaries, 14 July 1941.
36 Ibid., 10 April 1943.

described as "the Political and co-ordinating section."[38] These officials were generalists, whose careers included postings at British Embassies and Consulates around the world and in the Foreign Office. They were assigned to specific embassies for fairly short periods of time, and they took the experience, knowledge, and prejudices gained overseas back to their postings in the various regional Departments of the Foreign Office in London.[39] While some of the members of these departments had extensive experience in the Middle East, the junior officers often had very little, although they could be thrust into positions of great responsibility within the department during periods of transition or when more senior members were absent.[40]

Some of the most interesting Foreign Office remarks come from those officials who had previously served in the British Embassies in the countries on which they were

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37 Ibid., 11 April 1943.

38 Trefor E. Evans, ed. *The Killearn diaries, 1934-1946*, 391.

39 Within the Foreign Office, Egypt was dealt with by the Egyptian Department, which was also responsible for the rest of Africa, while Iraq fell under the purview of the Eastern Department, whose area included other independent states in the Middle East, the French mandated territories, and the foreign relations of Palestine, Transjordan, and the Gulf States. Correspondence from the Embassies was first dealt with at the level of these two departments. David Kelly writes in his memoir that each Department had a Head of Department, a "Number 2," and then a number of junior secretaries. Kelly provides a useful outline of the chain of command within the Foreign Office and the path an incoming despatch took: "By custom only the more important papers were referred to the Head of the Department, who made a similar filtration on to his particular Assistant Under-Secretary—each Under-Secretary supervised several Departments—and the final filtration went on to the Permanent Under-Secretary who decided what should go to the Secretary of State. Number 2 however had to decide what must be submitted to the Head of the Department, and he, therefore, had to see all the papers, besides usually dealing in the first instance with important and urgent matters." Sir David Kelly, *The Ruling Few or the Human Background to Diplomacy* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1952), 205-206.

40 Yapp Introduction, 7. A contemporary study of the Foreign Office described the structure and organization as "an inverted sieve. Business is strained, but in an upward direction; a junior of only a year or two's standing will find a few questions, only just off the verge of routine, with which he can deal alone: his immediate superiors (there are usually two or three of them under the Head of the department) can perhaps deal with half the number of papers that come in. They submit the rest to their chief…It is a system that necessarily means that occasional mistakes are made by immature judgment; but I believe that those mistakes are never of great importance, and that it is a system so tremendously important in training for responsibility that the risk is very well worth taking." Sir John Tilley and Stephen Gaselee, *The Foreign Office* (London and New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons Ltd., 1933), 265-266.

commenting, as they were able to combine a Foreign Office perspective with that of the "men on the spot."[41] This previous experience gave these officials an inside knowledge of both the Embassies and local politics, but it also could be a liability. Often this knowledge had been gained years beforehand, leaving the officials with an outdated perception of local personalities and conditions that they then projected onto later situations. It also meant that Foreign Office officials, fresh from Embassy postings where they perhaps did not always see eye to eye with their colleagues, could project their personal criticism toward their former colleagues and supervisors through their analysis of Embassy telegrams.

The relationship between Lampson and the Under Secretary of State, Maurice Peterson, is a particularly powerful example of this danger.[42] Lampson's reluctance to apply pressure to Farouk directly, and his tendency of urging the Foreign Office to support him in taking a hard line and then backing down at the last minute, often caused frustration at the Foreign Office, particularly with Peterson. He repeatedly criticized what he called "the Lampsonian Fallacy," by which he meant "the doctrine that you cannot allow yourself to raise a contentious issue in a potentially hostile quarter in Egypt unless you have tanks at your beck and call to see the thing through." Britain would be unable to

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[41] For example, R.M.A. Hankey returned to the Foreign Office to serve in the Eastern Department after a short term in Egypt and then Iran, while P.M. Crosthwaite and David Kelly arrived at the Foreign Office with experience in Iraq and Egypt respectively. C.H. Bateman served as Counsellor at the Embassy in Cairo, and then in 1940 and 1941 served as head of the Egyptian Department.

[42] Maurice Peterson, who served as the supervising Permanent Under Secretary for both the Egyptian and Eastern Departments during the middle war years, had served as acting High Commissioner in Egypt twice and came to the Foreign Office from his post as Ambassador to Iraq. The tension between Lampson and Peterson most likely dated back to 1934, when Peterson served as Acting High Commissioner while Lampson was on leave. Peterson made a political gamble that backfired and as Yapp notes: "Peterson…had an interest in demonstrating that his earlier policy had been right and that it was

take action in Egypt if the Ambassador would not meet with the King unless he had force to back him up: "There is also a lack of subtlety, or mental elasticity, about the Lampsonian doctrine which must occasion concern."[43]

Peterson was highly critical of Lampson, and the feeling was entirely mutual. Lampson once complained about having to work through Maurice Peterson "who, as all the world knew, was a proved dud with a chip on his shoulder against everyone. To my mind it was most unfortunate that everything to do with Egypt should pass through such a Head of Department. I had in fact protested but only got a snub for my pains."[44] The fact that there were such hard feelings between the British Ambassador to Egypt, the man on the spot, and the Under Secretary of State, the official most responsible for presenting the situation in Egypt to the Foreign Secretary and getting action taken on Egyptian issues in London did not aid in the smooth functioning of British policy in Egypt.

The Foreign Office did not always agree with their Ambassadors, but they were sensitive to the need to support the "man on the spot" and back him up on his decisions. They recognized that things looked different sitting in the Embassy in Cairo or Baghdad than they did from an office in London, and they often deferred to their representatives' recommendations. David Kelly, head of the Egyptian Department, was one of the more supportive Foreign Office officials in this respect, suggesting that

> on general principles I think it most unwise to interfere on questions of tactics about which we can have our views but cannot feel certain…Last summer, when Sir Miles Lampson sought assurances of support and pressed for 'directives,' it was agreed to tell him in effect that the local political situation and its handling by

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Lampson's subsequent failure to carry it out which had contributed to the new problem." Yapp Introduction, 8.

[43] Minute by Peterson, 4 Nov. 1942, FO371/31574.

[44] Killearn Diaries, 23 Nov. 1942.

> H.M. Embassy was a matter of which he was normally the best judge and that so long as he was satisfied we would prefer to interfere as little as possible. We do not want, as has too often been the case in the past, to be perpetually asked for authority about matters in which knowledge of the local atmosphere at the moment is all important and in which our decision may only tie the Ambassador's hands when some unexpected opportunity arises.[45]

He also recognized that "Every Ambassador in Egypt is always, and rightly, haunted by the fear of going too far and finding at the critical moment that His Majesty's Government are not prepared to back him up."[46] Lampson was not alone in this concern. While discussing the issue of possible British military intervention in the Kurdish uprising of 1943-1945, the British Ambassador to Iraq, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, recorded that he told the Iraqi Prime Minister "quite frankly that I was not going to put myself into a position which left me with the alternative of recommending British Military action or swallowing the insult of having my order rejected."[47]

In addition to clashes of personalities, there was often tension between the Embassy and the Foreign Office due to the fact that the Foreign Office had to deal with domestic considerations in formulating policy as well as developments abroad.[48] The issue of Zionism, for example, led to such tensions. It was a particularly sensitive issue in Iraq. In 1943 Lloyd George wrote a letter reinforcing British support for a Jewish state which was planned for publication. The Minister of State in Cairo wrote to the Foreign

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[45] Minute by Kelly, 9 March 1939, FO 371/23305.

[46] Minute by Kelly, 9 Oct. 1939, FO 371/23307.. Kelly had served as Counsellor at the Embassy in Cairo from 1934 until 1938, even serving as Acting High Commissioner and later Chargé d'Affaires in Lampson's absence, so he was able to speak from personal experience.

[47] Minute by Cornwallis, 4 Dec. 1944, FO624/66.

[48] Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher, and Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: the Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961) is particularly useful on this point.

Office proposing that, given the potential problems such a letter would create, they inform the Iraqi Prime Minister that Lloyd George was not a member of the government and his letter did not represent the official British view. However, in light of "political considerations at home" he asked for London's thoughts on this before instructing Baghdad to do so. Thompson, the Counsellor at the Embassy in Baghdad, responded that "'Political considerations at home' enter far too much into the conduct of Foreign Policy, in my opinion."[49]

Embassy officials were quite aware of the Foreign Office perspective, and consciously drafted their reports to appeal to or influence officials in London. Grafftey-Smith observed that Walter Smart, the Oriental Counsellor in Cairo, was particularly adept at this: "He had a keen and precise sense…of what the Foreign Office and Cabinet would think of any particular embassy representation. He never endorsed the pursuit of ends which from the angle of Cairo seemed all-important, if he thought (and he was generally right) that the Embassy's masters in London would be unsympathetic."[50] In 1944 one Embassy official in Iraq suggested that a telegram be redrafted because it put too negative a spin on events and he wanted to "be careful not to excite too much the already prevalent anti-Iraqi feeling in the F.O."[51] Cornwallis's telegrams were often optimistic in tone in an attempt to counteract what the Embassy considered to be the overly negative and critical perspective of the British military intelligence reports coming

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[49] Minister of State, Cairo to Ambassador, Baghdad, 14 March 1943; Minister of State, Cairo to Ambassador, Baghdad addressed to FO, 21 March 1943; Minute by Thompson, 24 March 1943, FO 624/33.

[50] Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, 134. This skill was even more impressive considering that almost all of Smart's career was spent overseas—he had very little experience actually working in the Foreign Office.

out of Iraq. The Ambassador suggested to the Foreign Office that "the unrelieved gloom of the intelligence reports need not be taken too seriously."[52] Experienced Embassy officials were familiar with the assumptions and sentiments of the officials to whom they were corresponding in London, and their dispatches reflect a conscious awareness of their audience.

British officials and the "official mind"

When examining the formulation of British policy towards Egypt and Iraq it is important to study what Robinson and Gallagher called the "official mind," the beliefs and assumptions shared by British officials, both in London and "on the spot." These assumptions were often implicit in British policy discussions, because, as Robinson and Gallagher observed, "there are many things too well understood between colleagues to be written down."[53] While officials in London and those in Egypt and Iraq viewed events from different perspectives, with the former taking a broader view and the latter more focused on local events, they shared a more or less similar background and set of assumptions about the Middle East and British policy in the region.[54]

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[51] Minute by Thompson, 21 Oct. 1944, FO 624/66.

[52] Cornwallis to FO, 27 Aug. 1941, FO 371/27079. See also Cornwallis to FO, 16 March 1942, FO 371/31371 and Cornwallis to FO, 17 March 1942, FO 371/31362.

[53] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 20. Robinson and Gallagher's work focuses on the partition of Africa during the 1880s but their comments on the official mind and the role of officials in policy formulation are useful for this later period.

[54] "England's rulers had inherited not only a world empire but the experience gained in bringing it together, and the assumptions and prejudices accumulated from past successes and failures inevitably influenced their behaviour in the partition. In the course of events, the great Departments of State and the Indian Service had compiled special historiographies of their own. Time and practice had engrained upon the minds of the oligarchy who still controlled policy abroad special notions of the national interest and of supremacy and security in the world." Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 21. Avi Shlaim echoed this idea in his study of the British Foreign Secretaries. After asserting that it was important to take into account the individual beliefs of these officials in assessing policy, he explained: "The belief system is composed of all the accumulated organised knowledge that the individual has about himself and the world outside. It may be thought of as a set of lenses through which information concerning the outside

Edward Said describes this shared background and assumptions as Orientalism, which he defined as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience."[55] Yet it is not as innocent an enterprise as this definition suggests. For Said, Orientalism is also an authoritative discourse and "the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient…a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[56] Behind Western policy towards the Middle East lay the accumulated weight of an Orientalist canon, "a library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held."[57] The assumptions that formed this system were transferred from literary and scholarly texts into the official Orientalism of policy makers, and formed an Orientalist "consensus" that served as the intellectual context for any westerner dealing with the Orient: "Orientalism can thus be regarded as a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient. The Orient is taught, researched, administered, and pronounced upon in certain discrete ways."[58] For Said, this was a monolithic system that engulfed all westerners dealing with the Orient, from which they could not escape.

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environment is received. It orients the individual to his environment, defining it for him, and identifying for him its salient characteristics." Shlaim, 16.

55 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 1.

56 Ibid., 3.

57 Ibid., 41.

58 Ibid., 202. While Said's critique opened the floodgates to scholarly literature both supporting and challenging his arguments, the most useful work for this study is Priya Satia, "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia," *American Historical Review* 111 (February 2006): 16-51. Satia's assessment of the views and assumptions underlying British military policy towards Iraq during the Mandate is useful for the later period under consideration here, due to the continuity of officials from the Mandate period through World War II.

Said mentions just a few of these "essential ideas" about the Arab world held by the West, for example: "its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness…"[59] There are frequent references in official documents to national characteristics, based on the assumption that these characteristics could explain how a particular group would respond to a situation and be used as the basis of successful British policy. Great effort was expended in trying to get into the "Arab mind," or the more local Egyptian or Iraqi "mind." The British not only believed that such a thing existed, but that they could use their knowledge of it to create policies that would appeal to the sensibilities of each group. These broad categorizations, while simplistic, provided an easy basis for forming policy or justifying its failure.[60] For example, one Foreign Office official, in discussing the successes and failures of Iraqi cooperation in the war effort, noted that

> A point which people are apt to forget is that the Iraqis are, like many Orientals, childish, unreasonable, vacillating and lacking in what we are pleased to call moral courage. It is no use judging them by the standards of Europeans, whose strong and weak points are alike of quite a different kind. If the Iraqis had possessed the qualities of application and resolution of even average Europeans, they would long ago have been a great nation, and we should not be in a position today to use, more or less as if they were our own, their communications, their oil and their country generally.[61]

Another official made a similar comment about Egypt: "Egyptians in general have certain characteristics which may be extremely inconvenient to us at present. These characteristics are however the reason why we have been able to establish ourselves in

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59 Said, 205.

60 See Said, Chapter 3 part 2.

61 Minute by Baggallay, 4 Dec. 1939, FO 371/23212 .

Egypt."[62] In both cases, the perceived weaknesses of the Iraqi and Egyptian people as a whole were used to explain the lack of local initiative in response to the war effort and worked to the advantage of Britain by allowing her to penetrate each country to the extent that she had.

Said was not the first scholar to criticize the essentializing nature of European assessments of the Orient. Albert Hourani, in a 1943 report on Britain and Arab nationalism, anticipated the later Saidian critique in his own analysis of British policy-making in the Middle East:

> Too often British officials have suffered from romanticism, overestimating the importance and worth of the unspoiled nomads of the desert and despising or neglecting the half-westernised young men of the towns. Too often also there has been a tendency to assume that the situation in the Arab countries was static and that so long as open revolution was avoided or repressed there was no need to pursue a policy of active encouragement to movements aimed at beneficial change.[63]

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[62] Minute by Seymour, 20 Nov. 1940, FO371/24626.

[63] Albert Hourani, "Great Britain and Arab Nationalism," June 1943, FO371/34958. From July 1942 until February 1943 Albert Hourani toured the Middle East under the auspices of the Foreign Office Research Department. He then wrote a report on his impressions of the region, particularly focusing on the state of Arab nationalism. Hourani's report will be cited throughout this study due to the valuable insights provided and its influence among British officials. It is also of interest because after the war Hourani became one of the foremost historians of the Middle East. The report was widely read and accepted among British officials both in the Middle East and in London, and it gives a good indication of the British view of Arab nationalism during World War II. The British response to Hourani's report was generally favorable. Lascelles, at the British Legation in Beirut, noted that he spoke with Hourani several times while he was preparing the report and "found him interesting enough when he was not preaching about the pig-headedness of British officialdom in these States. Personally I think his paper excellent, and agree with it to such an extent that it would be difficult to find anything much to say about it in a despatch… the morbid and self-centered mentality which he diagnoses so well undoubtedly makes the politically-minded Arab exceedingly difficult to please, and inclined to regard the British Empire as a milch-cow created for his exclusive benefit but strangely ignorant of her high purpose." Lascelles to Baxter, 29 April 1943, FO371/34958. Later in 1943 Hourani was transferred from the Foreign Office Research Department to work under Clayton in the Office of the Minister Resident in Cairo. As al-Sudairi notes, Hourani's wartime reports are also significant because they served as the foundation for his early historical works, although he grew critical of the policy-oriented style and "simplistically nationalist" viewpoint of these early writings. Abdulaziz A. al-Sudairi, *A Vision of the Middle East: An Intellectual Biography of Albert Hourani* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, London, 1999), 23. Two essays in the collection edited by Ilan Pappé and Moshe Ma'oz, *Middle Eastern Politics and Ideas: A History from Within* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997) are useful within the framework of this discussion: Gaby Piterberg's essay

Hourani called for officials to move beyond their static and romanticized vision of the Middle East, with its focus on traditions and past glories, and acknowledge the transformations taking place in the region, particularly the effect of urbanization and the emergence of the "young effendi," Hourani's "half-westernised young men of the towns," as a political force.[64]

In addition to these assessments of national character, British foreign policy was also based on a series of underlying assumptions, not formulated into any particular policy or even generally acknowledged, that nonetheless had a great influence on how the British viewed their relations with local populations. Like motifs subtly repeating throughout a piece of music, these assumptions were perhaps all the stronger and more influential for their unconscious influence.[65] One example was the British belief in the benefits brought by British rule to both Iraq and Egypt and a resentment at the lack of gratitude in return. This view was particularly prevalent among British officials in Iraq and was visible in their response to growing pro-German sentiment. They recognized the power of this development, and yet did little to counteract it. Instead, the British relied on a belief that the Iraqis would ultimately realize all that Britain had done in creating their country and protecting their independence, and in the end, Iraq would recognize this and

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"Albert Hourani and Orientalism" (pp. 75-88) examines Hourani's response to Said's work, while Amikam Nachmani's essay "A Rare Testimony: Albert Hourani and the Anglo-American Committee, 1946" (pp. 89-144) discusses Hourani's conception and analysis of Arab nationalism.

64 Hourani was not alone in urging British officials to pay more attention to the disaffected, newly-educated youth of the Middle East. Freya Stark, the famous travel writer-turned wartime propagandist and Laurence Grafftey-Smith of the Levant Consular Service issued similar calls for more attention to be paid to these groups. See Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant* and Freya Stark, *East is West* (London: John Murray, 1945). Stark in fact dedicates this work to "the Young Effendis."

turn away from pro-Axis rhetoric. C.J. Edmonds, who was considered to be one of the most knowledgeable Britons on the Iraqi character and culture, told a Foreign Office official that "His conviction is that in the long run the Iraqis know perfectly well wherein their true interests lie."[66] This same comment was offered by various Foreign Office and Embassy officials in the period leading up to the 1941 Rashid Ali coup. The general British belief that in the end the Iraqis would remember that their true interest lay with Britain, was the rather unsatisfactory British rationale for their policy in Iraq, and a means of reassuring themselves that Iraq would stay in the Allied camp at a time when they lacked military resources to take a stronger stance.

While the British believed that the Iraqis should be grateful to Britain for their very existence as an independent state, they felt that the Egyptians should be grateful to Britain for all the benefits British rule had brought to the country, in particular their work in improving the living conditions of the fellahin. In a statement typical of the British narrative of Egyptian history, a propaganda directive noted that "The British Administration, however, especially in the time of Cromer and Kitchener, was undoubtedly beneficial to the country, giving Egypt a degree of order and prosperity… which it had never known before, restoring Egypt's solvency, and putting an end to the serfdom of the Fellahin."[67] This belief in the benefits of British rule and influence led to a

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65 Avi Shlaim uses the term "images" for these assumptions: "Images are a crucial component of the belief system and, therefore, have a decisive effect on foreign policy since decision-makers act in accordance with their perception of reality, not in response to reality itself." Shlaim, 16.

66 Minute by Oliphant, undated [July 1939], FO 371/23210.

67 "Ministry of Information. Overseas Planning Committee. Plan of Propaganda for Egypt," 19 Aug. 1942, FO371/31579. David Kelly, who served at the British Embassy in Cairo during the early years of the war, refers to the period from 1882 through World War I as "the most happy and progressive period in the whole history of Egypt. It was the only period during which the unhappy fellah was treated with

corresponding resentment at the lack of gratitude on the part of the Iraqis and Egyptians. Wallace Lyon, who served in Iraq from the early days of the Mandate until 1944, repeated the British take on the formation of Iraq and wrote, in an injured tone that was not atypical:

> At that time [1921] Iraq, from a political and administrative point of view, was a Virgin State, and, as such, attracted the best and most virile type of British officer. Though youthful in years, they were the seasoned veterans of a victorious army, well trained in the hard school of experience, familiar with the facts of life and death and full of the enthusiasm of a new and nobler era. They hoped to assist in building a sound State, and, having given of their best, to retire in twenty or twenty-five years in honour and comfort and the gratitude of the Iraqi nation, which is the reasonable expectation of an official who spends his best years in a foreign and not too salubrious clime. But did they realise any of these humble ambitions? Not on your life!![68]

This sense of Britain having sacrificed for the benefit of Egypt and Iraq, only to have these efforts resented, recurred throughout the war period, as Britain found the Egyptian and Iraqi governments often less than cooperative in furthering the war effort.

British resentment at Egypt's lack of gratitude was only exacerbated as the war progressed and the Egyptians, in the view of the British, seemed unwilling to make sacrifices for the war effort. A common Embassy refrain in the later years of the war, once the threat to Egypt receded, was "There must be few, if any other, countries (and certainly none so near to the war zone itself) which had suffered less from the war than Egypt or where the Government and commercial concerns (by no means all foreigners)

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impartial justice, the only period in which neither justice nor administration was for sale." Sir David Kelly, *The Ruling Few*, 216.

[68] Paper by Lyon, "British Officials in Iraq: Suggestions for the Future," undated, enclosed in Cornwallis to Brigadier Clayton, 15 Jan. 1944, FO371/40063.

had made so much money, or where the upper classes at least had been able to continue their normal, comfortable lives."[69]

Another commonly held view was that Arab politics, particularly in Iraq, was inherently about personal relationships and patronage. To influence the course of local politics, one needed to leave the isolation of the British Embassy and establish personal contacts. These personal relationships could not be built overnight, but required a long period of time in residence as well as local knowledge and expertise. This assumption was not unique to the British. Egyptian President Anwar al Sadat observed that "In Egypt, personalities have always been more important than political programs."[70] Yet this idea became a sort of mantra for the British and profoundly influenced the way they approached diplomatic relations in both countries. In fact, one of the primary reasons Sir Kinahan Cornwallis was sent to Iraq as Ambassador in 1941, a particularly tense time in Anglo-Iraqi relations, was due to his extensive personal contacts, built up over a long career as adviser to the Iraqi Government.

This assumption had a number of weaknesses as a basis of policy. As will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, this fixation with the influence of the individual often obscured the larger structural developments in Egypt and Iraq. British officials in both countries believed that fighting local anti-British sentiment required neutralizing the influence of pro-German individuals. To achieve this they focused on interning or removing from power "Public Enemy Number 1," in particular the Egyptian Prime Minister Ali Maher and the Iraqi Prime Minister Rashid Ali and the Italians at the

[69] Shone to FO, 27 Sept. 1943, FO141/855.

Egyptian palace. Yet this direct challenge put these local leaders on the defensive, turning their dismissal into a major point of confrontation with ramifications that extended far beyond the actual influence of the individual. Even after these leaders were removed from office, the British still had not dealt with the underlying causes for pro-German sentiment in both countries. This was a powerful case of the forest being obscured by the emphasis on the individual trees.

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[70] Anwar al Sadat, *Revolt on the Nile* (New York: The John Day Company, 1957), 27.

Chapter 2: The Oriental Secretariat and Embassy Information Networks

Embassies serve a mediating function between the country that sends diplomatic representatives and the host country. With respect to policy making, an Embassy is responsible both for protecting the interests of the country that it represents, and informing the government at home of developments abroad. As David Kelly, a Foreign Office official who served in Egypt noted:

> the diplomatist has three main duties: he must state the case for his government as the barrister pleads for his client; he must try to influence in his country's interest…whatever social group happens to form at the time the actual governing class of the country in which he is accredited; and he must keep his government aware both of the personalities and the broad trends of the country and the course which events are likely to take.[1]

This three-fold function defines the work of the British Embassies in Egypt and Iraq during World War II. The first of Kelly's three duties was fulfilled by the British Ambassador, the public face of British diplomacy in the host country. In Egypt and Iraq the other two were in large part the responsibility of the staff of the Oriental Secretariat, and, in the case of Iraq, British Advisers working for the Government of Iraq.

The Oriental Secretariat represented the true point of contact between Britain and local governments.[2] The Oriental Counsellor and his staff were responsible for both the collection of information about the host country for the Embassy, and the distribution of information locally in the form of publicity and propaganda. By examining the staff of

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[1] Kelly, 10.

[2] Egypt, Iraq, and Iran were the only three countries of the Middle East to have such a section at the outbreak of the war. As other Middle Eastern countries gained independence the number of Oriental Secretariats expanded, to include Syria-Lebanon and later Libya and Afghanistan. The head of the section had the title of Oriental Secretary, Counsellor, or Minister depending on seniority within the larger British diplomatic hierarchy.

the Oriental Secretariat as well as the British Advisers within the Government of Iraq, their contacts and the ways in which they gathered and assessed information, one is better able to evaluate the foundation upon which British influence was built, as well as the weaknesses inherent in this system.

The staff of the Oriental Secretariats would today be described as area specialists, trained in the languages and cultures of the Middle East, and spending the majority of their careers in the region. Most of the officials working in the Oriental Secretariats during this period were members of the Levant Consular Service (LCS) which was originally created to service Consular posts in the Ottoman Empire.[3] Admission to the service required proficiency in five languages: Latin, French, and at least three out of four others (Ancient Greek, German, Italian, and Spanish). Unlike the regular Diplomatic Service, it was open to young men who lacked the right connections as long as they could pass the rigorous entrance exam. For example, Sir Reader Bullard, who served as Ambassador to Iran during World War II and began his career in the Levant Consular Service, was the son of a dockworker who chose the LCS as one of the few avenues

[3] The Levant Consular Service and the Oriental Secretaries are a particularly enigmatic group. The best sources of information about their training and responsibilities, aside from minutes in official documents, are published memoirs. Among the most readable and useful for this period are two works by Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant* (London: John Murray, 1970) and *Hands to Play* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975) and Sir Reader Bullard's memoir, *The Camels Must Go* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961). C.J. Edmonds describes his early training in the LCS in his unpublished manuscript memoir, *East and West of Zagros: Travel, War and Politics in Persia and Iraq, 1913-1921*, Edmonds Papers, Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford. Also useful for an earlier period is Ronald Storrs' memoir, *Orientations* (London, 1945). One of the most famous (and the only female) Oriental Secretaries was Gertrude Bell, who held this position in Iraq during the Mandate period. Her personal letters, diaries, and photographs shed light on her work as Oriental Secretary and are available on-line through the Gertrude Bell Project of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne Library at: http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/ D.C.M. Platt's book, *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls since 1825* (London: Longman, 1971), includes a useful chapter on the LCS, from its early roots in the Levant Company through its amalgamation with the General Consular Service in the 1930s.

available to get a free university education.[4] Yet selection to the LCS was not completely merit-based. Laurence Grafftey-Smith passed the LCS entrance exam on the eve of World War I and recalled being summoned before a Foreign Office selection board whose purpose was "to admit to examination only those considered to be of the right representational timber." The questions included whether or not he hunted, and his club memberships.[5] After being accepted, new student interpretors were sent to Cambridge for a two-year course in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish under the supervision of Professor E.G. Browne. Grafftey-Smith wrote that "Our first morning of work was challenging, for we started Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Russian between breakfast and luncheon."[6] This system changed after World War I, as more and more members of the service were drawn from the military or sent to learn languages locally. The LCS was later amalgamated with the General Consular Service and, during World War II, the Foreign Service.[7]

The responsibilities of the Oriental Secretaries varied depending on location and the needs of each specific Embassy. For example, Walter Smart in Cairo was mainly concerned with political analysis and intelligence, while Vyvyan Holt in Iraq dealt with cultural and educational issues as well. Yet they all shared a number of traditional duties, such as providing information to the Ambassador on local personalities and politics,

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4 Reader Bullard, *The Camels Must Go*, 38. C.J. Edmonds had a similar motivation for choosing the Levant Consular Service because training as a student interpreter included two free years of study at Cambridge, and "to get to Oxford or Cambridge somehow being then the summit of my ambition." *East and West of Zagros*, Edmonds Papers.

5 Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, 4-5.

6 Ibid., 7. D.C.M. Platt emphasizes the uneven nature of LCS training during this period: "It was a patchwork of learning, with gaps in some of the most important places. No provision was made for formal instruction or examination in their magisterial duties…Nor was there any instruction in trade and commerce. Such knowledge as Levant consuls possessed was picked up by the light of nature." Platt, 168.

7 Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, 14-16. This amalgamation was much lamented and seen as weakening British interests in the region. See Kelly, 232.

interpreting political developments, compiling summaries of the press and reporting on local parliamentary debates, translating for the Ambassador in meetings, and dealing with issues of protocol relating to official dinners, parties, and audiences. Grafftey-Smith mentions another very important responsibility that sheds light on the Oriental Secretaries' role in policy formulation: "They were also expected to minute with some expertise all incoming papers concerning their special subjects and to draft the necessary despatches or telegrams in reply."[8] The Oriental Counsellor was traditionally the first to see and comment on any incoming local intelligence reports, so his interpretation of events had a strong influence on the Ambassador's assessments. When the Head of the Chancery in Cairo suggested in 1942 that he might see reports before they were sent to the Ambassador, Smart defended the traditional line of transmission, explaining that intelligence reports "contain all sorts of local points difficult to appreciate without specialist local knowledge…the direct contact between the Head of the Mission and the O.S. in political reporting has, I believe, always existed."[9]

Oriental Secretaries developed extensive local contacts and played an important role in Embassy intelligence-gathering and propaganda efforts. They were allowed to avoid some of the required rituals of the British community in order to spend more time with local contacts. As Grafftey-Smith noted, rather than frequenting the Turf Club with the British ex-patriate community, the members of the Oriental Secretariat in Cairo went to the Mohamed Ali Club where "the most secretive pasha might be forgiven if, over his

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8 Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, 92.

9 Smart and Wright, the Head of Chancery, ultimately reached a compromise, so that urgent reports went straight to the Ambassador from Smart, whereas less urgent reports would be sent to the

black coffee, he confided some humour of the day's events or some revealing judgment on his neighbours."[10] The Oriental Secretaries held an intermediate position with respect to the Embassy's local contacts. They were often called upon to meet with local contacts whom the regular diplomats, tied by diplomatic protocol, could not see.[11] While the staff of the Oriental Secretariat were given some leeway in who they spoke with, there were, however, limits, and the British relied on agents in the intelligence services not holding formal diplomatic positions for these contacts.

The Embassies were generally preoccupied with events in the capitals, but the Oriental Secretaries were also responsible for coordinating information on developments in the provinces. During the 1930s after the British advisory positions in Egypt were terminated, the Embassy had fewer contacts outside of Cairo and Alexandria. The Foreign Office became concerned about the Embassy's lack of information regarding developments in the provinces and "the loss of personal contacts between the Embassy staff and Egyptians outside the immediate Government circle has threatened to become a serious weakness in a country where personal contact is specially important." John Hamilton, an adviser in the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior, joined the Oriental Secretariat at the Embassy after his position was eliminated. Hamilton's contacts within

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Chancery before the Ambassador. Minute by Smart, 16 Dec. 1942 and Minute by Wright, 17 Dec. 1942, FO141/844.

10 Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, 92. The Minister of State, Casey, also belonged to the Mohamed Aly Club, and Lampson admitted that due to Casey's membership "quite naturally the Egyptian politicians who form the bulk of the members talk local politics with him, or try to." Killearn Diaries, 7 July 1942.

11 For example, when Jamil Mardam and other Syrian nationalists arrived in Iraq, the British wanted to find out their views on a potential Axis occupation of Syria. The Foreign Office instructed Ambassador Newton to try and have an Embassy staff member make unofficial contact with them. Holt, the Oriental Counsellor, was chosen to do so, and met Mardam at a "small luncheon party." This allowed

the Government of Egypt proved particularly useful in his new job, and he was charged with taking trips to Upper Egypt and the Delta and reporting on the status of public opinion in these areas. Hamilton's "discreet personal tours" were considered a useful means of remedying this situation and were highly valued by both the Embassy and Foreign Office.[12]

During World War II the Oriental Secretariat in Cairo was led by Sir Walter Smart, the Oriental Counsellor.[13] Smart, or "Smartie" as his friends called him, was highly respected both in Cairo and in London, although he is an enigmatic figure, having left no personal papers that give a sense of his personality. One must piece together short personality sketches drawn by his colleagues. Julian Amery noted that in appearance he looked as if he "belonged to a literary salon or an Oxford Common Room. Yet this man was the mainstay of British power both in Egypt and through the Middle East for thirty years or more. No Englishman, perhaps since Cromer, did so much to uphold and broaden Britain's position in the Levant."[14] Smart was educated in France, and his colleagues agreed that his intellectual approach to issues was more in the French tradition

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him to gauge his position without having an official meeting, which might have offended the French. FO to Newton, 10 Nov. 1940 and Minute by Holt, 30 Nov. 1940, FO 624/19.

12 Minute by Kelly, 1 April 1939, FO 371/23305.

13 Smart spent most of his career in Cairo, serving there from 1926 until 1947. He was promoted to Oriental Counsellor, the head of the section, in 1929. Trained as a member of the Levant Consular Service, Smart spent his early career primarily at consular posts in Iran. From 1920 until 1922 he served as Oriental Secretary at the Legation in Tehran, where he allegedly played a role in the 1921 coup that led to Reza Shah's rise to power. Homa Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990), 16-17. He was later removed from office in Iran because, as Christopher Sykes noted, he "knew more than the sovereign liked about his rise to power." The pretence for Smart's removal was that he was seen with another member of the Legation staff at "an orgiastic party at which a famous dancer had performed," which "had so gravely offended Moslem feeling that the unfortunate lady had been stoned" and Smart dismissed. It was later determined that the stoning had been faked. *Walter Smart by some of his friends* (Chichester, n.d., copy in the St. Antony's Middle East Centre), 11.

14 Ibid., 1.

than in the English, and in fact he ultimately retired to France.[15] John Hamilton commented on his diplomatic abilities: "He saw his diplomatic duties as the day-to-day protection of British interests in the widest sense, and as the handling of relations with the Egyptians in such a manner that there was always a way out of an *impasse*."[16] David Kelly noted that he combined great erudition with "an extraordinary mental detachment," and "he had an uncanny feel for what was going on inside what is, to so many westerns, a sealed book, the oriental mind." He was also "Always prepared to take any risks to his own career when he considered his Arab friends in the right."[17] It was generally believed that, were it not for his divorce from his first wife which barred him from higher office, he would have gone even farther in the diplomatic service.[18] Yet he had a happy second marriage to Amy Nimr, who came from a prominent Greek Orthodox Lebanese family and was the daughter of Faris Nimr, one of the most respected journalists in Cairo.[19] Amy Nimr was herself an artist, and the Smart home in Zamalek was a popular gathering place for those involved in Cairo's thriving art and literature scene during World War II.[20]

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15 Ibid., 7. Grafftey-Smith wrote that Smart's French education "…gave to his thinking a cutting edge of logic and an unsentimental realism peculiarly French, invaluable in the appraisal of diplomatic documents and diplomatic crises." Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, 134.

16 Hamilton also found Smart to be a difficult person to work with. *Walter Smart by some of his friends*, 7.

17 Kelly, 232.

18 Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, 135.

19 Faris Nimr co-founded *al-Muqtataf*, a monthly journal, and founded the daily newspaper *al-Muqattam*, which generally took a pro-British line. Smart was known to spend Sundays with the Nimrs, and his close relationship with one of the leaders of the Egyptian press must have been of great value to the Embassy and his work at the Oriental Secretariat. This marriage also made him brother-in-law to George Antonius, author of *The Arab Awakening*, who was married to one of Amy Nimr's sisters. Kelly to Rushbrook Williams, 29 Nov. 1939, FO 371/23372. For biographical information on Faris Nimr, see Arthur Goldschmidt Jr., *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 156-157.

20 Artemis Cooper, 149-150.

Smart, like many Oriental Secretaries, was involved in gathering political information for the Embassy, maintaining contact with officials in the Palace and Government, and assessing the validity of reports arriving at the Embassy. The personal connections that Smart developed during his long tenure in Egypt were of great benefit to this work, and gave him a good sense of internal affairs and public opinion. Lampson highly valued Smart's advice, though he did not always take it. The Ambassador was notoriously hard on Smart and Grafftey-Smith recalls in his memoirs how shocked he was, while serving as acting Oriental Secretary in Smart's absence, to see how Lampson treated his Oriental Counsellor. He noted his surprise on reading "some of those red-ink minutes he had addressed to Walter Smart, a precision-instrument of great worth and sensitivity: the Ambassador might have been admonishing an under-gardener."[21]

The Oriental Secretariat in Baghdad was led by Captain Vyvyan Holt. Like Sir Walter Smart in Cairo, Holt's long service in Iraq made him a valuable resource on Iraqi politics and personalities. One Foreign Office official noted that "Holt's knowledge of the country and of its leading inhabitants and his ability to obtain information are alike remarkable. Everyone who has worked with him agrees in that."[22] However Holt did not

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21 Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, 238.

22 Baggallay to McDougall, 1 March 1940, FO 371/24559. Holt had a long career in Iraq. After serving in India during World War I, he joined the Iraq Civil Administration in 1919 as an Assistant Political Officer in Sulaimani. During his time in the Kurdish areas of Iraq he learned Kurdish and founded the first Kurdish-language newspaper. He was appointed Oriental Secretary in 1926, a position which he held until 1944. Partway through his time in Iraq he transferred to the Levant Consular Service. Holt also served as British representative to the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations. The Embassy's official press release issued on his departure from Iraq in 1944, noted that "A man of great versatility for all his retiring temperament -- Captain Holt is, among other things a keen horseman and polo-player and an authority on Bernard Shaw, and Ibsen." Stewart Perowne, 7 Oct. 1944, FO624/39.

enjoy Smart's influence, partly because, by all accounts, he was a spent force by World War II, but also because the Embassy in Baghdad could still rely on British advisers within the Government of Iraq for inside information. When Sir Kinahan Cornwallis arrived as Ambassador in 1941, he had his own personal contacts and as much experience in Iraq as Holt had, and therefore was less dependent on his expertise than Lampson was on Smart.

Smart and Holt served as the institutional memory of their respective Embassies, having held their posts for long periods while other staff came and went. Yet this continuity could also be a liability. Some Foreign Office officials felt that both Smart and Holt had stayed too long and needed to be replaced by officials with a fresh perspective, as "it is only in the rarest cases that an Oriental Secretary does not deteriorate in utility after, say, 6 years."[23] When the Foreign Office suggested that Smart be replaced, Lampson fought hard to keep him and succeeded in convincing London to do so. Part of the difficulty with replacing Holt was finding someone with his expertise, particularly after the amalgamation of the Levant Consular Service, from which many Middle East experts had been recruited, with the General Consular Service. Given the high turnover

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After leaving Iraq Holt spent a brief period at the Foreign Office and he was then appointed Oriental Counsellor to Tehran in December 1945. Holt was appointed Consul-General in Seoul and later served as British Minister to the Republic of Korea and in 1950 he was captured by the North Koreans and "endured harsh treatment during which nothing was heard of him until the Foreign Office eventually used Russian good offices to secure his repatriation." Peter Lowe, *Containing the Cold War in East Asia: British Policies towards Japan, China and Korea, 1948-53* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 181. J.E. Hoare recounts, in one of the few descriptions of Holt's personality, the impression that Holt made on George Blake, one of his colleagues in Korea: "He found his boss, Captain Vyvyan Holt…a man of great charm, but also something of an eccentric and an ascetic, preferring boiled vegetables, fruit and curds to what he disdainfully dismissed as 'hot meals.'…Equally eccentric, perhaps, was the King's Birthday Party in June 1950, which, despite the pouring rain, Holt insisted on holding on the lawns, where he greeted his guests in gumboots and umbrella, rather than risk having people being sick over his furniture." J.E. Hoare, *Embassies in the East: The Story of the British Embassies in Japan, China and Korea from 1859 to the Present* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 1999), 198.

rate of Embassy staff in Iraq, Crosthwaite considered it unfortunate that "the work of the Embassy since 1932 has really hinged on the local knowledge of the one man taken over from the High Commission staff.[24] By the time Holt left in 1944, the general consensus was that he had put in many good years of service, but lost his effectiveness as an adviser in the process. One British adviser observed of Holt and his role in the Embassy: "His knowledge there is useful but his effect is always negative."[25] While the continuity provided by these long-serving Oriental Secretaries was valuable, the lack of fresh input proved to be a weakness in the Embassy's political assessments during the rapidly changing environment of World War II.

The signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in 1936 and the termination of the British advisory positions in the Government of Egypt gave the Oriental Secretariat even more responsibility. Lampson was a delegater. He believed strongly that the Ambassador should have final say in important decisions, but he was also heavily reliant on others for information. Before the treaty Lampson met regularly with various British advisers to Egyptian Government ministries to gain their input when making decisions. In fact, the

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[23] Minute by Crosthwaite, 16 Feb. 1940, FO 371/24559.

[24] Minute by Crosthwaite, 7 Feb. 1940, FO 371/24559/E488.

[25] Edmonds Diaries, 19 Sept. 1939. After meeting Holt in 1941 Lampson described him in his diary as "A curious, jerky sort of man, and I think if I were the Ambassador in Bagdad I should be very careful before accepting his views without checking up upon them." Killearn Diaries, 18 Aug. 1941. The difficulty that the Embassy in Baghdad had in drafting Holt's "valediction," the official dispatch summarizing his accomplishments in Iraq upon his departure, and the negative tone that creeps into what would normally be a flattering document, provide the best evidence of Holt's ineffectiveness as Oriental Counsellor in the later years of his career in Iraq. While highlighting his generosity and accomplishments in Iraq, the dispatch also observed that Holt was due, "indeed overdue, for a thorough change," having remained in Iraq for so long that he had grown increasingly solitary: "The unvaried routine of his existence has induced a certain staleness in his approach to the problems of the day and this, no doubt, has been the underlying cause of a growing negation which militated against the expression of any initiative." Cornwallis to Eden, 11 Oct. 1944, FO624/39.

Foreign Office often criticized him for relying too heavily on them.[26] Sir Walter Smart as Oriental Counsellor had been an active participant in Lampson's regular meetings with the advisers, but after their dismissal he became Lampson's main political adviser. Even after his many years in Egypt, Lampson continued to rely on Smart for information on local affairs. He did not always take his advice, but he was careful to consider Smart's dissenting opinion when they disagreed.

In contrast to Egypt, British advisers continued to play an important part in Anglo-Iraqi relations, although their numbers and authority were greatly reduced after 1932. Under the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty the only British officials that the Iraqi Government was obliged to hire were judges (and this stipulation only lasted until 1942), but if Iraq wanted foreign advisers in any other ministries they were required to turn to Britain first. British advisers continued to be voluntarily employed in many other ministries, and in 1939 Iraq requested a number of new experts with technical skills, such as a statistician, and experts in agricultural co-operatives, fisheries, and industry.[27] The continued presence of these advisers, particularly in the Ministry of the Interior, is an important distinction between the British presence in Iraq and Egypt and the ways in which the Embassies gathered political information.

British advisers in Iraqi ministries not only assured a pro-British influence in the Government, but also allowed the Embassy and the Foreign Office to maintain a close eye on the internal workings of the Iraqi Government without depending solely on the

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[26] As Malcolm Yapp observes, "Indeed it was a matter of frequent complaint in the Foreign Office from the time of Allenby onwards that High Commissioners were tools of their advisers." Yapp Introduction, 12.

[27] Newton to Halifax, 4 Dec. 1939, FO 371/23218.

cooperation of Iraqi officials. Yet it was often difficult to find appropriate candidates for advisory positions. W.E. Houstoun-Boswall, the Acting Counsellor at the Embassy, noted that while Iraq was obliged to get advisers from Britain under the treaty, "It must be admitted that it has not infrequently happened that when they have wanted somebody we have, after a frantic search, tried to foist on them some 'antique' or…failed to produce candidates at all."[28] This staffing problem became even more urgent as the war progressed. As Major-General G.G. Waterhouse, Inspector-General of the Iraqi Army and Head of the British Advisory Military Mission wrote to Newton in March 1941, even though he considered the Royal Iraqi Air Force to be "practically valueless for war" and therefore RAF advisers to be "wasted" in Iraq, he still felt they had great political value and they should ensure that the advisers were of a high calibre: "No one can be quicker than the Iraqis in discovering the idleness or ignorance of any foreigners working with them and though they readily tolerate those qualities among their own people they strongly resent them among the 'mercenaries' they pay for."[29] This was not just a question of efficiency, but also of maintaining British prestige.

The adviser with the most influence, both with the Iraqi Government and the Embassy, was C.J. Edmonds, Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior from 1935-1945.[30]

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[28] Houstoun-Boswall to Baggallay, 4 May 1939, FO 624/16. Houstoun-Boswall compared the challenge of finding qualified British advisers with the problem of supplying arms to Iraq: the treaty bound Iraq to buy arms from Britain, and yet Britain was unable to supply them, but also did not want them to purchase arms elsewhere.

[29] Waterhouse to Cornwallis, 12 March 1941, FO 624/23.

[30] Edmonds was born in Japan and began his career in the Levant Consular Service. He spent much of his early career in Iraq working with the Kurds, serving as an Administrative Inspector in Mosul from 1922-1925. He was considered by both the British and the Iraqis to be an expert on tribal affairs. In fact the Iraqi government often called on Edmonds to deal with difficult tribal issues, and he continued to travel widely throughout the country, maintaining his personal contacts. He then became Assistant Adviser, and in 1935 Adviser, to the Ministry of the Interior, a position he held until 1945. Edmonds' extensive

His long tenure at the Ministry of the Interior meant that he had extensive contacts with Iraqis, and was able to keep a close watch of the internal political maneuverings of Iraqi politicians. Edmonds regularly met with the Ambassador, who often forwarded his reports on tribal affairs and local politics to the Foreign Office. His position within the Iraqi Government gave him a different perspective on events than that of the Embassy staff. He often recommended that the Embassy take a more moderate, restrained approach to dealing with the Iraqi Government. Reflecting Edmonds' extensive influence in Iraq, a French-language newspaper referred to Edmonds as the "Cerberus of the Orient," the gatekeeper who kept track of the comings and goings in Iraq.[31]

One of the challenges facing the advisers was how to balance their obligations to the Government of Iraq, their employer, with their loyalty to Britain and the Embassy's need for information. McDougall, the Legal Adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted on leaving Iraq in 1940 that he tried to limit his contact with the Embassy because "it was my obvious duty to maintain an independent position vis-à-vis the Embassy in the interest of the Government employing me, whose case it was my duty to argue at times against the British Government itself like any other government." However, when he felt that Iraq would benefit from Embassy contact and involvement he would try to make the

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personal papers, including the diary he kept throughout his service in Iraq, are held at St. Antony's College, Oxford, and provide a wealth of information on his work with the Kurds, particularly during the Mandate period. It also provides an insider's perspective on Iraqi politics, as Edmonds relished recording the political intrigues of the Iraqi politicians. Edmonds published a memoir based on his time in northern Iraq: Cecil J. Edmonds *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs: Politics, Travel and Research in North-Eastern Iraq 1919-1925* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957).

31 Clipping of article titled "Cinq de l'Intelligence Service" by Roland-Lennad in *L'Orient*, 26 April 1937, pasted in Edmonds Diaries, May 1945. This colorful portrait of Edmonds describes him as "the key to Asia. One could not travel from Europe to the Orient without C.J. Edmonds knowing about it…he has the dry British allure...He knows his people well. Rough but just, he is the last rampart against insurgents. London sleeps well knowing that this rampart will not fall."

connection. Unfortunately McDougall found this difficult due to the strained relations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which often made too much of any "small grievances" and the Embassy, which had a "tendency to represent British interests in the narrowest sense as any other foreign mission might do."[32]

Collaborators, Intermediaries, and Intelligence

The value of the information provided by the Oriental Secretariats and the British advisers was dependent on the quality of their sources. The work of Ronald Robinson and Colin Newbury provides an effective framework for examining the intersection of imperial and local interests through the mechanisms of collaboration that can be applied to the Embassy's information networks. In his 1972 essay, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," Robinson argued that the success of European imperial enterprises required the cooperation of collaborators who served a mediating function between the imperial power and the local power structure based on their own place within this local system.[33] Robinson's theory is useful because it puts the focus on local politics: "the working of imperialism was determined by the indigenous collaborative systems connecting its European and Afro-Asian components. It was as much and often more a function of Afro-Asian politics than of European politics and economics."[34]

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[32] McDougall to Baggallay, 7 Jan. 1940, FO 624/19.

[33] Ronald Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration", 1972, reprinted in Wm. Roger Louis, ed., *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976), 131-132. Robinson argued that it was only when this relationship broke down, and there were no more collaborators available, that direct rule or decolonization resulted.

[34] Both Robinson and Newbury emphasize the continuity of the collaborative system from the pre-colonial through the colonial and post-colonial stages. Robinson noted that even after this collaborative system broke down, nationalist parties, after inverting collaboration into non-cooperation, had to develop

Colin Newbury adopts the sociological and anthropological patron-client model to describe the relationship between colonial authorities and local contacts. This model represents the intersection of two hierarchical systems, that of the imperial and local administrations: "At the point of interaction between the two systems relations were political, in the sense of determining access to resources, confirmation of status, and were defined in a great deal of prescriptive regulation…As in all political systems, disagreement, clash of aims and values, compromise, and rewards were part of the business of running regional empire with the cooperation of the governed." Newbury prefers the term patron-client relationship to that of collaboration because the latter term "misses two essential points inherent in patron-client relations: differences in status and the 'mediating mechanism' common to the brokerage roles of both chiefs and European officials."[35]

While the work of Robinson and Newbury primarily deals with colonial administration, their insights into the meeting of local and imperial interests are also useful for the study of Britain's informal empire in the Middle East during World War II, particularly with respect to the exchange of information. During the Mandate period in Iraq and the Protectorate in Egypt, British officials serving in the local governments fulfilled this mediating function between the Residency, which represented British interests, and the local government. The signing of the Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Iraqi Treaties which limited the number of British officials serving as advisers, and the

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their own collaborative relationships with the "neo-traditional elites", providing continuity from the colonial through the post-colonial period. Robinson, 147-148.

35 Colin Newbury, *Patrons, Clients, and Empire: Chieftaincy and Over-rule in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 262.

constraints of Britain's heavy wartime commitments meant that Britain became even more dependent on its local contacts for the intelligence that was so vital to the war effort. A plethora of new military and civilian intelligence organizations arrived on the scene in the early months of the war, and yet the burden of political information gathering and reporting lay with the Embassy. Therefore, to understand the Embassy's views of local politics and their recommendations to the Foreign Office, one must first answer the question, who were the Embassy staff talking to?

One of the most important challenges that any Embassy faces is how to maintain contact with the local population. This is important not only as a means of winning the support and goodwill of local leaders, but also as a useful way to gauge public opinion and gather information. The British Embassy in Cairo during Lampson's time as Ambassador was a bustling social hub, and Lampson's diary gives great detail about the numerous luncheon and dinner parties held, the guests invited, the topics of discussion, and any useful tidbits of information or gossip provided by those who stayed behind afterwards for private talks. Lampson and his staff were experts at "dinner party diplomacy," and these well-planned social functions allowed the Embassy staff to maintain contact with important Egyptian political figures, and gave Egyptian politicians an opportunity to express their views to the Embassy staff. In 1940 Lampson held a series of lunch parties with former Prime Ministers as a way to keep in touch with opposition leaders. Lampson reported his meeting with Nahas was particularly useful, as "it is not easy in the nature of things in Egypt to have direct contact with Nahas; and it is useful to

know what he is thinking and saying."[36] Lampson received positive confirmation of the value of these lunches from Delany, the Reuters Agent in Egypt, who told Lampson that he had spoken to many of the guests after their lunches, and "the change in their attitude was remarkable."[37]

Lampson had a gift for these formal social occasions, using them to calm ruffled feathers, win support, or place pressure on uncooperative Egyptians. There was, however, a serious deficiency in the Embassy's "dinner party diplomacy:" it was limited to the very upper levels of Egyptian society and government. It was extremely difficult for the Embassy staff to get the opinions of lower and middle class Egyptians, those not within the inner circles of power at the Palace or in the Government. This was a problem which all diplomatic officials, even today, face: how to gather information from the "common man" who might never talk to someone in an official position, how to take the "pulse" of the "Arab street." The various military intelligence organizations in Cairo and secret agents partially remedied this deficiency, but for the most part the Embassy's assessment of Egyptian politics and public opinion reflected the limited nature of their contacts.[38]

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[36] Lampson to FO, 13 Jan. 1940, FO 371/24622.

[37] Killearn Diaries, 1 Feb. 1940. These special meetings could also backfire. After a similar series of private meetings with Egyptian journalists, which Lampson used to encourage them to take a pro-British line in their papers, the Wafd journalists spread rumors that Lampson's meeting with them signaled the imminent return of the Wafd to power. Lampson then chided his Oriental Secretary for having arranged the meeting without considering that it might be used against the Embassy. Killearn Diaries, 13 Sept. 1939. Delany served as an important intermediary himself towards the end of the war because he was in close contact with Nokrashy, the Prime Minister, at a time when the Embassy was not on good terms with the Government of Egypt.

[38] Grafftey-Smith pointed out in his memoir that while he was in Egypt during World War II there were limited opportunities for British officials to meet with those outside of higher official circles, such as the effendis and young military officers: " it was all but impossible, before the end of the second World War, for a member of the Cairo Residency or Embassy staff to meet and cultivate that age-group." The lack of interest in these contacts was not one-sided; Grafftey-Smith points out that until later in the

In Iraq the current of anti-British feeling limited these social interactions. The British Embassy in Iraq was criticized by both the Foreign Office and sympathetic Iraqis for not providing enough opportunities for Embassy officials and Iraqis to meet and socialize. This was a crucial issue with the outbreak of war, as the German community in Iraq was seen as much more open and friendly in its relations with Iraqis of various backgrounds. It was not only a question of making contacts to gather intelligence, but of making friends and allies within an Iraqi community that was increasingly pro-German in sentiment. C.J.E. Edmonds, the British Adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior, noted that among British officials in Iraq "There were, in fact, two schools of thought; the isolationists who had thought that the Embassy should be super-correct and restrict its contacts as far as possible to the members of the Government of the day so as to avoid any suspicion of intrigue or interference in internal affairs; and those who advocated a wider distribution of Embassy attentions."[39] Newton made repairing these social relationships a priority as Ambassador, and Edmonds approvingly noted in September 1939 that "He has taken up strongly the harm hitherto done by the 'isolationist' policy of the Embassy and is being very good over giving parties and establishing contacts."[40]

In addition to these formal social contacts, the British Embassy in Cairo maintained close ties to a small number of well-placed Egyptians who had almost unlimited access to the Ambassador. These collaborative relationships took many forms. The British in Egypt were particularly concerned with maintaining contacts with trusted

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war, "a Residency contact would have been thought of by the *effendis* themselves as more compromising than desirable." Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant,* 242-243.

39 Edmonds to Cornwallis, 7 Sept. 1941, FO 624/24.

officials in the Palace, the Government, and the opposition parties, allowing the Embassy to keep watch over developments in the other centers of political power in Egypt. Contacts with other groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood or Young Egypt, fell outside the diplomatic mandate and were usually the purview of intelligence organizations and secret agents.

One of the Embassy's closest allies in the royal family was Prince Mohamed Ali, the crown prince. The Prince was welcomed at the Embassy as the most openly pro-British member of the King's family, but he was far from a disinterested observer. Behind his scathing criticism of the King and his rule lay the Prince's own cherished hopes for assuming the throne.[41] The Foreign Office often took the Embassy to task for taking too much of what Prince Mohamed Ali said at face value.[42] Despite these warnings, the Prince was an embarrassingly frequent visitor to the Embassy, and his reports of Palace gossip peppered many of Lampson's despatches to the Foreign Office.

On the political front Hussein Sirry Pasha was a particularly useful Embassy contact, considered reliable by both the Embassy and the Foreign Office. He had trained as an engineer in London and the British considered that his familiarity with English

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[40] Edmonds Diaries, 27 Sept. 1939.

[41] To give one example, in 1943, after informing Lampson of the anti-British sentiment of most of the royal family, "Prince Mohamed Aly whilst formally disclaiming any vestige of personal ambition said, in so many words, that we should never have peace or security in Egypt as long as King Farouk remained on the Throne; and that surely what we, Great Britain, needed was someone sincerely and genuinely convinced that the British connection was the salvation of Egypt and guarantee of British political and strategic interests here." Memorandum by Lampson, 22 Nov. 1943, FO141/855. Anyone in doubt as to Prince Mohamed Ali's real aspirations need only visit his palace, conveniently located right across the Nile from the British Embassy, and now open to the public as the Manial Palace Museum. It includes its very own lavishly decorated throne room, bearing testimony to its owner's ambitions. While the British did seriously consider putting him on the throne at various times, and his British allegiance was never in doubt, he was generally considered to be too old to rule, especially as he did not have any heirs.

methods and long years working with British engineers gave him a special understanding of British goals in Egypt, and that "This background enables the Pasha to regard his colleagues with some detachment."[43] Lampson and Sirry were, in Lampson's words, "good personal friends."[44] Their close relationship became even more valuable when Hussein Sirry became Prime Minister in November 1940. Yet even having a willing collaborator as Prime Minister such as Hussein Sirry, was not enough to ensure Egyptian cooperation in the war effort. While friendly to Britain, Sirry did not have the political authority necessary to deliver what Britain required.[45] The British believed that the only party that had the necessary national support to implement wartime measures was the Wafd, and so after the Abdin Palace incident in 1942 the British found themselves supporting in power a party that, only two years earlier, had presented a strongly worded petition demanding British evacuation from Egypt. As Robinson noted, the role of collaborators was often fluid, with a group or individual that at one point opposed the British later on, in a different context, consenting to cooperate.[46]

The Embassy received information from a broad spectrum of the Egyptian elite in addition to politicians. Hussein Sirry's wife was a particularly valued source of information about the Palace. Lampson described Madame Sirry as having "for years past

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42 Minute by Thompson, 21 Nov. 1939, FO 371/23307.

43 Minute by Kelly, 14 March 1939 FO 371/23304. For a biographical sketch of Sirry see Arthur Goldschmidt, Jr., *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt*, 200.

44 Lampson to Eden, 20 Jan. 1943, FO141/855.

45 Robinson and Gallagher's observation about collaborators in Africa is applicable here: "The Foreign Office was discouraged to find that receptive African rulers were not strong, and that strong African rulers were not receptive." Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: the Official Mind of Imperialism*, 45.

46 Ronald Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," 132.

been open with me to the verge of indiscretion about Court affairs…she has special sources of information as being the aunt of Queen Farida who is devoted to her and whom she sees almost daily often with King Farouk." The Embassy also gathered information from Lady Lampson who had contact with the Palace women.[47] Medical personnel, for example the Queen's dentist, were privy to intimate details about the happenings at the Palace, which they then passed on to the Embassy. This was also the case in Iraq, where Sir Harry Sinderson, physician to the royal family as well as Prime Ministers Nuri al-Said and Rashid Ali, was always happy to pass on information to British officials.[48] There was a fine line between viable intelligence and pure gossip, and much of what the Embassy staff received from these unofficial sources was the latter.

Egyptian contacts within the Government were another important source of information. Before the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty Britain had advisers and contacts within the Ministry of the Interior, which allowed the Residency to keep close tabs on local developments. After the treaty was signed Britain was supposed to conduct official business with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in accordance with diplomatic tradition. However, the Embassy unofficially maintained its Ministry of the Interior contacts. A Foreign Office minute from 1939 notes that certain officials at the Ministry of the Interior who were sympathetic to British interests made it possible for the Embassy, despite the treaty, "to maintain such close liaison with the Egyptian Public Security and Police

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[47] Lampson to FO, 30 Nov. 1940, FO 371/24627. Janice Terry notes that Jacqueline Lampson "gathered enormous amounts of information from the wives of politicians and even Queen Nazli who often reported on Farida's marital difficulties with the errant Faruq." Janice Terry, *The Wafd 1919-1952* (London: Third World Centre for Research and Publishing Ltd., 1982), 242.

[48] See Sinderson's memoirs of his years in Iraq, *Ten Thousand and One Nights: Memories of Iraq's Sherifian Dynasty* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973).

authorities that we have hardly noticed in practice the difference. Embassy officials are constantly in and out of the Ministry of the Interior and are given complete copies or photostats of documents found or depositions made."[49]

Collaboration is never a one-way street. Both Robinson and Newbury note that collaborative relationships were mutually beneficial, providing the British with local information and influence while also providing local collaborators with financial and political benefits and legitimacy that could be exploited to strengthen their own position within the local hierarchy or consolidate power over rivals.[50] Thus, a serious shortcoming of all of these local sources of information was the fact that they had personal interests in establishing contact with the Embassies and the information they provided had to be examined for these personal motives. Embassy officials were well aware of these biases, but the constant repetition of certain refrains from local contacts often penetrated, consciously or not, the British "official mind." Robinson notes that collaboration could prove to be "a dangerous game" for imperial officials, as it put them "up to their eyes in the politics of their so-called subjects, even when they did not altogether understand them. They were in the indigenous business of faction and clientage-making."[51] This made gathering accurate information even more important, and a large portion of the Embassy papers are reports of developments in local politics. The Embassies were acutely sensitive to any insinuation that they were not loyal to their friends, which drew them into meddling in local politics more than they would have liked.

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[49]Minute by Kelly, 5 Dec. 1939, FO 371/23307.

[50] Ronald Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," 131.

[51] Ibid., 143.

Officials in Egypt and Iraq were often willing to tell the British what they thought they wanted to hear. Particularly common in both countries were out-of-office politicians who came to the Embassy to implore the British to take a more active role in local politics and replace the government. Yet as Newton observed, these same men who called for British intervention when out of office, strenuously opposed this intervention when back in office: "Men of this kind would, it seems, like to have British influence on tap to turn on to help them personally whenever they get into difficulties with their own people, but would be the first to denounce it whenever it came into conflict with their own plans or ambitions."[52] Edmonds observed that the danger of meeting with opposition leaders was "that the Iraqi statesmen who demanded interference most loudly when they were out of office were the first to resent it when they came back into power."[53]

Another problem was that opposition leaders could use their British contacts to try and influence their opinion. In analyzing the Iraqi political situation in 1944, Edmonds noted that most of the main opposition figures in Iraq were in close contact with British political and intelligence officials in the Iraqi provinces, either through their government positions or long-standing personal relationships. Drawing on his own experience working in the Iraqi provinces, Edmonds concluded that "it is from conversation with such persons that British officers in the provinces must generally form their opinions regarding happenings in the capital." The "apparently unanimous verdict" against the Cabinet, as it was described by Britain's officials in the provinces in their reports, could probably be found to be based "largely on the opinions of a very limited and prejudiced

52 Newton to Halifax, 5 July 1939, FO 371/23211.

class of persons."[54] The importance Britain placed on stability in the Iraqi provinces, and the challenge of gathering information and maintaining close contact with the Embassy in Baghdad, provided opportunities for the "outs" to undermine the government in power. A similar danger existed in Egypt:

> as is always the case, the 'outs' try to win our support by seeking to make our flesh creep over the possibilities of trouble…As every Egyptian Government believes that in the last resort their fate depends upon the friendliness of His Majesty's Government, and as this acts as a brake, it is useful for the Ambassador to maintain friendly touch with the political 'have nots.' But he must ever be on his guard against being persuaded by the latter that we ought to head a crusade for the better government of the country.[55]

Maintaining contact with the opposition had its uses but, as this Foreign Office official wisely noted, it was important to keep the views of the opposition in proper perspective.

In Egypt the Embassy not only received these calls to change the government, but also to rein in the King or even replace him. In March 1939 Lampson reported on talks that he and members of his staff had with a wide range of Egyptian politicians who "all anticipate that the Embassy will have to intervene soon in order to curb the Palace's style and none seems to regard the possibility as anything but natural."[56] While the Foreign Office was usually cautious in taking these calls for intervention from Egyptian politicians seriously, in this case they authorized Lampson to "risk provoking a personal crisis" with the King if needed. Kelly noted that while Lampson decided not to act on this at the time, he was allowing his feelings about the palace to be widely known in Cairo

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53 Edmonds to Cornwallis, 7 Sept. 1941, FO 624/24.
54 Edmonds to Cornwallis, 14 March 1944, FO 624/67.
55 Minute by Thompson, 19 Jan. 1940, FO 371/24622.
56 Lampson to Oliphant, 17 March 1939, FO 371/23305.

and "There will, if precedents are any guide, be a growing volume of appeal to the Embassy to intervene in the Palace, and the longer we can let this fermentation go on the stronger will be our position when and if we do have to intervene."[57] Not only was the Embassy listening to those calling for intervention, but it was even expecting more Egyptians to approach the Embassy on these lines once it became known that the Ambassador was unhappy with the Palace.

While some collaborators provided primarily information, others took a more active role by serving as a bridge between the British and local Egyptian and Iraqi leaders. The term intermediary best describes their function, as their efforts were beneficial to both the British and the local interests they represented. The use of intermediaries allowed the British to maintain the façade of noninterference, and allowed the local government to maintain the façade of independent action. Lampson was particularly reliant on this system, for the reasons cited in Chapter 1, and he had contact with intermediaries in both the Palace and in the Wafd, Egypt's main political party.

Due to Lampson's hesitancy to see the King frequently, the King's Chef du Cabinet came to play an important role as the main point of contact between the King and the Embassy staff. This was an extremely influential position because whoever held it had the ear of the King, controlled access to the King, and exerted political influence over his decisions. The British were particularly concerned with anyone put in this post, as he had the potential to either be useful as an intermediary between the Palace and the Embassy if sympathetic to the British, or to serve as a dangerous anti-British influence in

57 Minute by Kelly, 31 March 1939, FO 371/23305.

the Palace. In early 1939 the post was held by Ali Maher, whom the British distrusted and considered to be a negative influence on the King. Ali Maher was well aware of the importance of his position as liaison between the Palace and Embassy. In an attempt to win the Embassy's trust, he proposed that the British use him as more of an intermediary, suggesting that if Lampson let him know ahead of time what he wanted to discuss with the King, he "would then prepare the Royal mind."[58]

The Embassy found it much easier to work with his successor as Chef du Cabinet, Muhammad Ahmad Hasanein, who held this position from 1940 until 1946.[59] He was generally willing to cooperate with the Embassy, and the Embassy considered him to be a much better influence at the Palace than his predecessor. Lampson observed of Hassanein in early 1939 that "The Pasha sees things probably more clearly than anyone else at present at the Palace."[60] Hassanein was the intermediary Lampson had been looking for, and he was repeatedly summoned to the Embassy to convey Lampson's requests and comments to the King, and return with his responses. David Kelly had known Hassanein at Oxford, and describes him as "a friend of my youth, with whom I could discuss politics and exchange confidences in a way which was not possible with anyone else." They had "an unwritten law that neither of us must let the other down by

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58 Draft by Kelly for Halifax to Lampson, 10 March 1939, FO 371/23304.

59 Lampson Diaries, 184 (footnote). When young Prince Farouk went to England before assuming the throne of Egypt, the Oxford-educated Hassanein accompanied him and served as his adviser there. Hassanein was well-known as "an Olympic fencer, a pioneer aviator and an explorer of the remoter Western Desert." Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, 232. Hassanein was also believed to be secretly married to King Fuad's widow, Queen Nazli.

60 Lampson to FO, 22 March 1939, FO 371/23305.

any indiscretion," but he admits that, given Hassanein's influential position, "these contacts were of great value."[61]

Hassanein provided a useful service to the Embassy by serving as intermediary with the Palace, but he was not a wholehearted supporter of British policy. Hassanein's motivations were essentially pragmatic and he acted in the interest of the Palace. One historian described him as "Faruq's Polonius."[62] Cooperation with Britain was a means of undermining the influence of the Wafd and ensuring a greater role for the King in Egyptian politics. Hassanein was himself adept at playing the political game and using his role as intermediary to further Palace interests.[63] The Embassy was well aware of his divided loyalties, but ultimately considered him to be a positive influence in the Palace.[64]

The most important and influential Egyptian intermediary during this period was Amin Osman, who had a reputation as one of the most pro-British Egyptians in Cairo.[65]

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[61] Kelly, 232-233.

[62] Terry, 296.

[63] Janice Terry notes that Hassanein had close ties with the Wafd as well as the Palace and the British: "In such a way, Hasanayn was able to pull the strings of a number of puppet groups, while he himself remained in the background. As a result, no one could be absolutely certain on which side Hasanayn stood, although it was best to assume he constantly tried, by divide and rule methods, to set all of the Egyptian political parties and movements at loggerheads so that the Palace might emerge victorious." Janice Terry, 241.

[64] Bowker to Bevin, 25 Feb. 1946, FO403/469.

[65] Amin Osman is perhaps the best example of the "professional Anglomaniac", a term Albert Hourani uses to describe Arabs who closely allied themselves to Britain and British interests. Hourani 1943 Report. Amin Osman's ties to England began during his years at Victoria College, a private boys' school in Alexandria closely modeled on the English public school tradition. While at Victoria College he developed a close friendship with the headmaster, Ralph Reed. Amin Osman consulted Reed, and valued his opinion, throughout his political career. Amin Osman continued his education at Brasenose College, Oxford, where he studied law, and married an Englishwoman. Artemis Cooper described Amin Osman's wife Kitty (Katie) as "a plump blonde barmaid with a Cockney accent." Cooper, 30. He also studied law in Paris. After his return to Egypt he entered government service, working in the Legal Department and later in the Ministry of Finance.

While Amin Osman did not leave any personal papers, one gets a sense of his personality and life from two works, Sahar Hamouda and Colin Clement, eds., *Victoria College: A History Revealed* (Cairo:

His contact with the British Embassy began during negotiations for the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in 1936, when he served as secretary-general of the Egyptian delegation.[66] Lampson was immediately impressed by his work, noting that "Amin Osman not only knows English extremely well but threw himself heart and soul into the discussion and on many occasions actually improved, in translation, the points made by our side."[67] During the negotiations Amin Osman also developed a close working relationship with Mustapha al-Nahhas, leader of the Wafd party. Although Amin Osman never formally joined the Wafd party himself, he served as intermediary between Nahas and the British Embassy while Nahhas was in power from 1936-1937 and 1942-1944.[68] Mohamed Mahmoud also used him as an intermediary during his time as Prime Minister. He was highly esteemed by the Embassy, but he had also made enemies in powerful places, most importantly King Farouk and Ali Maher. The disapproval of both men at times prevented Amin Osman from attaining higher office and limited his effectiveness as an intermediary.[69] While he received many personal benefits from his role, he ultimately paid for it with his life. He was assassinated in January 1946.

Despite their willingness to cooperate with the Embassy, both Hassanein and Amin Osman at times used their position as trusted intermediaries to further both their

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The American University in Cairo Press, 2002) and the memoir of his schoolmate, Edward Atiyah, *An Arab Tells His Story* (London: John Murray, 1946). While both works provide useful details about Amin Osman's life, they also border on the panegyric.

66 "Uthman, Amin" in Arthur Goldschmidt Jr., *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt*, 220-221.

67 Lampson Diaries, 482 (23 March 1936).

68 Although some works assume that Amin Osman was a Wafd party member, the British documents reveal that he never officially joined the Wafd party. See for example Lampson to Eden, 25 Nov. 1943, FO371/35541.

69 Lampson to FO, 3 July 1939, FO 371/23306.

own interests and those of the local groups they represented, which influenced the information or assistance they provided to the Embassy. Hassanein urged the King to cooperate with the Embassy not out of any great love for the British, but as a political necessity. Amin Osman, despite his frequent public professions of pro-British sentiment, often used his position to engage in intrigue that ultimately undermined British interests.

The collaborative system was vital to Britain, but it was also fragile during the war. Britain was limited in what it could offer in return for cooperation, particularly in the early years when it was unclear who would ultimately be the victor. Newbury points out the inherent insecurity of the patron-client system, as "Both sets of officials, it is worth remembering, were not immune from removal and redress from within their own hierarchies."[70] Britain's local collaborators were often limited in their ability to further British aims by their own commitments. The Wafd, for example, needed to put its supporters in power and reward its own clients, which was partially responsible for the charges of corruption and favoritism raised in the Black Book affair of 1943. The vulnerability of this system is demonstrated by the fact that in 1941 Britain needed to occupy Iraq and in 1942 had to threaten to depose the Egyptian monarch in order to put pro-British governments back in power in both countries. This vulnerability forced the British to tolerate local developments that they might, from a stronger position, have opposed. Given Britain's wartime commitments they often had no choice but to compromise.

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[70] Newbury, 262.

Chapter 3: The Middle East on the Eve of War

To the British on the eve of war, the Middle East mattered. In a January 1939 report the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee examined Britain's priorities in the Middle East from a strategic perspective, arguing that "Our hold on the Middle East is an essential in our present scheme of Imperial Defence on account of Air Communications." The report then examined the strategic value of each country in the region. Egypt lay on Britain's imperial communications routes to both the East (India and East Asia) and the South (the Sudan and other parts of Africa). Egypt was crucial for the defense of the Suez Canal, and "The port of Alexandria provides the only large harbour in the Eastern Mediterranean from which the Navy can maintain our sea power in the Eastern Mediterranean in a war in which Italy is hostile." Iraq lay on the overland route across the Middle East, and also served as headquarters for the Royal Air Force which ensured communications with India and the Far East as well as protecting Britain's "most important oil interests" in both Iran and Iraq.[1] Quoting an earlier report, the Chiefs of Staff concluded that:

> 'Without overlooking the assistance which we should hope to obtain from France, and possibly other allies, we cannot foresee the time when our defence forces will be strong enough to safeguard our territory, trade and vital interests against Germany, Italy and Japan simultaneously'…If the balance were to be weighed

[1]While this study focuses on Egypt and Iraq, their importance to British strategic interests on the eve of war was closely tied in British eyes to the other territories of the region. Palestine offered added protection to the Suez Canal and was on the air communication route with British territories further East. Haifa was the terminus of the pipelines that brought oil from Iraq and Britain's land line of communication with Iraq, India, and the Persian Gulf. Iran was significant as a buffer between the Soviet Union and India, and also for its oil. Saudi Arabia was important because of its potential to cause trouble in the rest of the region: "Alone, Ibn Saud, if he so chose, could cause us considerable military embarrassment, but, should he fall under the active influence of either Germany or Italy, his capacity to cause trouble would be greatly increased." The port of Aden was crucial to maintaining British power in the Red Sea. Committee of Imperial Defence, "Strategic Importance of Egypt and the Arab Countries in the Middle East," Report by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, 14 Jan. 1939, FO 371/23192.

> against us even more heavily by the hostility of the Arab states of the Middle East, our position would be still more grave.[2]

They firmly believed that the Middle East was a connected whole, with the fall of one country affecting the others and British interests in India and even South Africa.[3]

British officials were agreed that the Middle East was strategically important to the larger war effort, and they looked to the Anglo-Iraqi and Anglo-Egyptian treaties of the 1930s to ensure local cooperation: "The security of our forces and of our lines of communication depends on our ability to convince Egypt and the Arab States that it will be to their interests to observe their Treaty obligations, where these exist, or to maintain friendship with Great Britain where no Treaties have been concluded." [4] World War II then, proved to be the greatest test case of the British system of informal empire through bilateral treaties. Would the treaties be sufficient to ensure that Egypt and Iraq cooperated on the war effort?

During the early years of the war the British pursued a status quo policy towards the Middle East, namely to avoid stirring up trouble that might require more active British intervention. [5] This point was made strongly in debates within the Foreign Office regarding how to respond to growing pro-German sentiment in Iraq. In 1939 H.L. Baggallay, a member of the Eastern Department, stated that "it is presumably in our interest that we should have as quiet a time as possible in Iraq and the other countries of

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Amery to Halifax, 23 July 1940, FO 371/24580.

[4] Committee of Imperial Defence, "Strategic Importance of Egypt and the Arab Countries in the Middle East," Report by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, 14 Jan. 1939, FO 371/23192.

[5] While the focus here is on Egypt and Iraq, a similar point was made regarding Iran and the threat of a Soviet invasion: "We should endeavour to maintain the *status quo* as long as possible and meanwhile keep Russia guessing." Minute by Coverley Price, 11 June 1940, FO371/24583.

the Middle East. So long as General Nuri is in power in Iraq we are at any rate likely to have a quiet time there, in the sense that Iraq will continue to carry out the alliance and…to do more or less what we want in matters of real importance." He expected continued trouble with Iraq over issues such as Syria and Palestine, but he concluded that they could not ask for much more from Iraq than cooperation on the alliance and should try to "demonstrate that the alliance pays" and avoid losing what support they had in the country.[6] The head of the Eastern Department at the time agreed: "I doubt whether it would be to our interests to try to play a very much more active role in Iraq's internal affairs than we do at present."[7] The Foreign Office hesitated to intervene in local politics unless it was absolutely necessary for the war effort and was willing to turn its glance away from questionable practices on the part of local governments. While local leaders were probably unaware of this policy, and the British certainly tried to keep it that way, they did in fact have a certain amount of leeway to maneuver within the confines of the treaties.

The status quo policy contributed to the tension between officials in London and the men on the spot, particularly Ambassadors Lampson and Newton, who saw the long-term threats in Egypt and Iraq and argued for more forward policies. Officials in London viewed local developments in the Middle East in terms of larger regional and international policy, with the greater war effort always in mind, whereas British representatives in the Embassies were more aware of the local impact of London's decisions. One Eastern Department official complained: "noone in the M.E. can see

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6 Baggallay to Hammond, 15 Dec. 1939, FO 371/23212.

7 Minute by C.W. Baxter, 7 July 1939, FO 371/23210.

anything outside the M.E. itself"[8] These two perspectives, the one local and the other international, were in a state of ongoing tension.

The status quo policy reflected the real limits of British influence in the Middle East during wartime. Any other policy would have risked local unrest and required British military intervention. Beyond the fact that Egypt was technically independent, G.H. Thompson of the Foreign Office pointed out that they could not take a more interventionist policy and declare a Protectorate as they did during World War I for the very practical reason that they did not have the manpower in place to administer Egypt, let alone control it militarily. In what might be considered a concise statement of the Foreign Office's policy toward Egypt during World War II, he noted:

> it is a fact that however much we might wish to control the country physically, we cannot do it for the lack of the odd four thousand British officials scattered about in every branch of the administration whose assistance would be vital and upon whom we could once count. Since effective Egyptian cooperation in the war is a necessity, it seems desirable, if we possibly can, to avoid political crises and disputes. What we want to do is to work amicably with an Egyptian Administration that is sufficiently efficient to get things done.[9]

This was an important point of policy for Britain in the Middle East as a whole: nonintervention as far as possible unless the local situation could disrupt the larger war effort. Even when Britain wanted to change the local situation, in this case going to the extreme of taking over Egypt, officials realized that this was not physically feasible.

While the status quo policy served Britain's wartime needs, it conflicted with another widely held goal: that of preserving British prestige. British officials believed that perceived British weakness in the war effort and Allied losses on the battlefield were

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[8] Minute by R.M.A. Hankey, 18 Aug. 1943, FO371/34975.

[9] Minute by Thompson, 12 Feb. 1939, FO 371/24623.

more damaging than German propaganda. Local populations must be convinced that Britain still mattered and would ultimately win the war: "Prestige is a hateful word, but nevertheless it is the one thing which holds our position in the Middle East together and must continue to do so until we are militarily much stronger there than we are at present."[10] Lampson frequently echoed this refrain in his telegrams to the Foreign Office.

The value the British placed on maintaining stability in the Middle East with minimal intervention during the early years of World War II will be demonstrated through an examination of a number of case studies: the push for Egypt and Iraq to declare war on Germany in Fall 1939 and the campaign to remove the Egyptian Prime Minister Ali Maher and the Iraqi Prime Minister Rashid Ali from power in 1940. In all these instances, the British compromised in the interest of preserving the "quiet time" in the Middle East.

The outbreak of war in September 1939 raised the issue of the role that Britain's imperial possessions would play in the developing conflict. Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India, declared war on behalf of India in the early days of the war. Indian leaders were outraged that war had been declared in their name without consulting them. Members of the Indian National Congress serving in provincial governments resigned in protest.[11] British officials in the Foreign Office and the Embassies in the Middle East made it a priority to get the independent Middle Eastern states to issue similar declarations of war on Germany on their own initiative. The British did not expect these countries to make any substantial material contribution to the war effort, but they believed a declaration

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[10] Minute by Baggallay, 27 May 1940, FO 371/24580.

would rally local populations to the Allied cause, provide Britain with greater freedom to operate in the region, and reinforce the Anglo-Iraqi and Anglo-Egyptian treaties. This was Britain's most pressing issue in the region during the early months of the war, and it was considered to be the litmus test of Egypt and Iraq's loyalty. The fact that both countries managed to avoid such a declaration despite British pressure reveals the limitations of British power and the fluidity of its war aims.[12] Britain eventually concluded that a declaration of war by these countries might actually hurt British interests in the long run by providing a basis for Egypt and Iraq to make post-war demands for greater autonomy.

Egyptian politics

Egypt at the outbreak of World War II was formally an independent country, although in reality this independence was limited. The British first occupied Egypt in 1882, a temporary measure formalized during World War I when Britain declared a protectorate in the country. After the war, amidst widespread protests against Britain's presence, the Protectorate was ended and a new Constitution was put in place in 1922, followed by a new treaty of alliance in 1936. This treaty granted Egypt her independence while protecting British rights to intervene on four reserved points: external defense; the

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[11] On the response of Indian nationalists to the declaration of war issue, see Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, volume 1: 1889-1947 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), Ch. 16.

[12] Albert Hourani attributed Arab hesitancy to wholeheartedly join the Allied cause to the residual influence of World War I: "Many fell into the same mistake as certain other nations made, the mistake of believing that the last war was being fought over again and that all which was necessary was to avoid the errors which had been made before; the last time the Arabs had believed British promises and British propaganda and had suffered the consequences, and therefore this time they would be particularly suspicious of anything coming from British sources." Hourani 1943 Report.

rights of foreigners in Egypt; the Sudan; and lines of communication for the British Empire.[13]

Britain had great influence in Egypt for a number of reasons: the presence of British ground troops under the provisions of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, a long period of association, economic ties (Britain was Egypt's leading market for exports), a large British community, and the ongoing Italian threat from Libya. This relationship was also bolstered by less tangible forms of influence, including the strength and continuity of Britain's diplomatic representation in Egypt as personified by Sir Miles Lampson, with its emphasis on protocol and ceremony, and what one Foreign Office official described as the "firm belief prevalent in Egypt that we put ministers in office and turn them out, and that we can secure government appointments for those who earn our favour." When British troops would be forced to leave after the war it would be more difficult to maintain their influence, but there would probably be internal unrest and financial difficulties that would lead most Egyptians to "in their heart of hearts, feel just as great a

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[13] Among the most useful general works on Egypt are P.J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt: from Muhammad Ali to Mubarak*, 4th edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) and Jacques Berque, *Egypt: Imperialism & Revolution*, translated (from the French) by Jean Stewart (London: Faber, 1972). For Anglo-Egyptian relations see Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) and Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Britain and the Egyptian Nationalist Movement 1936-1952* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1994). Nasser, who is the daughter of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, portrays Anglo-Egyptian relations during the period after the 1936 treaty as a stark dichotomy between the two sides, glossing over some of the complexities of both the various strands of Egyptian nationalism and the intentions of the British officials. Yet the author provides useful commentary on some of the most important Egyptian Arabic sources on Anglo-Egyptian relations. For the interwar period in Egypt, see Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment, 1922-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). Artemis Cooper's *Cairo in the War 1939-1945* offers an entertaining and useful account of Egypt during World War II which balances information on the military operations in the Western Desert with the gossip of Cairo.

need for our presence as ever."[14] As war approached, the British firmly believed that they were in Egypt to stay, regardless of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty.

Three forces dominated Egyptian politics during the interwar period and until the 1952 revolution: the Egyptian Palace, the British Embassy, and the nationalist Wafd party.[15] The Wafd had its origins in the delegation of Egyptian leaders that requested British permission to travel to London to present Egyptian demands for *istiqlal tamm*, or complete independence, after World War I.[16] During the 1920s, the Wafd developed into an established political party with a "dual character." It retained an internal tension between its role as the leader of the Egyptian nationalist movement, and its role as a political party with all the implications of political patronage that this entailed.[17]

The Wafd party in the 1930s and 1940s was led by Mustafa al-Nahas. After receiving a legal education in Egypt, Nahas joined the Wafd at its founding and, after Saad Zaghlul's death in 1927, took over the leadership of the party. Nahas was the primary Egyptian negotiator of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, which led to an identity crisis of sorts for the party. It had achieved its goal of independence, but it was not the total independence envisioned by the early Wafdist leaders. The Wafd after 1936 was a party without a platform, yet it retained widespread popular support. As the

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14 Minute by Cavendish Bentinck, 6 July 1939, FO 371/23210.

15 The Egyptian Palace and the British Embassy are discussed in Chapter 1. Two useful full-length works on the Wafd party are Marius Deeb, *Party Politics in Egypt: the Wafd and its Rivals 1919-1939.* (London: Ithaca Press, published for the Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College Oxford, 1979) and Janice J. Terry, *The Wafd 1919-1952.*

16 The British High Commissioner denied the request. Members of the delegation were sent into exile which proved to be one of the sparks that led to the 1919 Egyptian Revolution. See Deeb Chapter 2 and Terry Chapter 4. As Terry explains, "The Wafd, in its initial stages, was not therefore a political party in the western interpretation of a party working towards getting and keeping political power. The Wafd, in its initial stages, was definitely a movement led by an Egyptian social and economic elite for the purpose of gaining independence from the British." Terry, 87.

Oriental Counsellor, Walter Smart explained: "The Wafd is the only well and widely organized political party and its discipline is perfect. The fiat of the leader of the Wafd is, in practice, undisputed, however much individuals in the Wafd may at times murmur against it."[18] There were a number of other political parties in Egypt, many of them offshoots of the Wafd, but during World War II the British turned to the Wafd as their best ally in attaining their wartime desiderata in Egypt.[19]

The British described Egyptian politics using the analogy of the three-legged stool. Each leg represented one of the main interests in Egyptian politics: the Palace, the Wafd party, and the Embassy. The British believed that power in Egypt was always held by some combination of these three political forces, and moved in an orderly pattern that could predict future political developments. Maurice Peterson, a Foreign Office official with long years of experience in Egypt, gave a lengthy analysis of this system in 1942: "So long as the three influences which determine the course of events in Egypt remain, in order of importance, ourselves, the King, and Egyptian public opinion, the changes in Egyptian internal politics move in a perfectly regular cycle." This cycle had three stages as power moved from one leg of the stool to the next. In the first stage a Prime Minister would come to power with both Palace and Embassy support. Over time he would lose Palace support due to his British ties, leading him to rely too heavily on the Embassy. As a result "the King knifes his Prime Minister over some issue in which we feel unable to interfere…We become rather sulky and take the line that as the King has brought down

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17 Deeb, 419.

18 Smart, Memorandum on the Wafd, 10 April 1946, FO141/1077.

19 For the other political parties, see Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment.*

the man who had our confidence, His Majesty must get himself out of the ensuing mess as best he can."[20]

Having challenged the Embassy-backed Prime Minister, the King would then put in office a Prime Minister with strong Palace ties, leading to Palace interference in local politics and popular unrest. This Prime Minister often represented one of the smaller minority parties which were affiliated with the King. According to Peterson, at this point it was only the presence of British troops that prevented unrest with Palace rule from breaking out in revolution, and so eventually the British would decide to intervene which "leaves the King in his turn sulky and aloof." Power would then fall to the third leg of the stool with a popular Government, most likely Wafdist. Over time this government invariably began to threaten British interests and so "we become alarmed, drop all pretence of non-interference, fall back on the Treaty and even strain it, and insist on a change of government for which we are obliged to seek the co-operation of the King and in a measure to defer to his wishes."[21]

The importance of this model to British decision-making in Egypt cannot be overemphasized. British officials both at the Embassy and at the Foreign Office viewed Egyptian politics in terms of this three-legged stool with power circulating among the three legs, and were hesitant to take any action that would upset the balance. For Egyptian nationalists, one of their main goals was to knock out one leg of the stool, the British. The 1952 revolution was, in a sense, an attempt to get rid of this model

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[20] Maurice Peterson, "Note on the habitual sequence of political changes in the Government of Egypt," 27 Jan. 1942, FO 371/31566.

[21] Ibid.

altogether, by cutting out all three legs of the stool: the traditional nationalist parties, the Palace, and the British.[22]

The three-legged stool was the accepted model of political influence in Egypt, but there were other actors on the political scene, with roots in the 1930s, that would come to play an important role in Egyptian politics by the end of the war. These forces, which historian Selma Botman collectively refers to as "nonparliamentary forces," included labor organizations and religious organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the nascent socialist and Young Egypt.[23] British officials disagreed as to the relative importance of these organizations, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, or *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*. British military intelligence in Egypt warned that the Muslim Brotherhood was potentially dangerous, particularly if it cooperated with the Wafd. The Embassy and the Foreign Office, however, found this threat exaggerated. Terence Shone, the Counsellor at the Embassy, noted that military intelligence was "wrong in indicating an immediate and actual danger instead of a future and potential one. The Defence Security Office have always had the idea that the Ikhwan might one day replace the Wafd as the great majority party. This, however, appears rather unlikely."[24] The Foreign Office believed that British security officials paid attention to the Brotherhood because its members had the potential to be used as "suitable instruments of assassination" by the

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22 Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser, 63.

23 Selma Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution, 1919-1952* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 154.

24 Shone to Scrivener, 10 Oct. 1943, FO371/35538. The Embassy was frustrated that these military intelligence reports, dealing with political issues, were sent to London without giving the Embassy an opportunity to comment on them. Shone mentions: "the danger of uncontrolled political reporting by a military organisation only, to say the least, partially qualified to report politically at all. This case bears out I fear only too well our apprehension of what the soldiers will do if they are allowed to take an independent position on 'non-operational' intelligence."

nationalist leaders if Egypt ever had another period of unrest like that after World War I. One Foreign Office official, in a statement that reflects the views of the Egyptian Department, wrote of the Brotherhood that its members were "all ignorant pretenders to Islamic puritanism. They are anti-foreign from ignorance, fear and their own self-importance. There isn't one among them to be taken seriously and though they talk a lot about martyrdom, they are not the kind to suffer it yet."[25] The head of the section agreed with these comments on the Brotherhood, "for whom I can see no future."[26]

During World War II these "nonparliamentary forces" were not powerful enough to unseat the main political centers of the Wafd, the Palace, and the British. However, they could serve as destabilizing forces when they acted in cooperation with or against these three centers of power. By the end of the war, these new groups, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood and Young Egypt (Misr al-Fatat) challenged the Wafd for the loyalty of younger Egyptians.[27] The Wafd was still the majority party in Egypt, but it no longer commanded the loyalty it once did.[28]

Egypt and the Declaration of War Debate

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[25] Minute by Chapman Andrews, 5 July 1943, FO371/35536.

[26] Minute by Scrivener, 5 July 1943, FO371/35536.

[27] For these religious organizations, see J. Jankowski, *Egypt's young rebels: "Young Egypt," 1933-1952* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1975) and Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993 reprint [1969]). There are a number of works on the rise of the labor movement and communism in Egypt during this period: Selma Botman, *The Rise of Egyptian Communism, 1939-1970* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988); Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); and Ellis Goldberg, *Tinker, Tailor, and Textile Worker: Class and Politics in Egypt, 1930-1952* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

[28] Deeb attributes this change to the fact that these organizations appealed to the Wafd's base constituency: "They were more complex and superior in organization, had elaborately professed programmes, and they appealed to the self-same class which had been the Wafd's mainstay in the urban centres, namely the effendiya. It was the first time that the Wafd had been challenged, not from the top by splinter groups being formed from seceding members from its high command, but by organizations which

The issue of an Egyptian declaration of war was closely tied to the question of Egypt's obligations to Britain under the 1936 treaty. The Egyptian response to the Abyssinian crisis in 1935 and the growing concentration of Italian troops in Libya brought home to the British the importance of strong defenses for Egypt and made a declaration of war seem even more important. Even before war began Germany and Italy were actively spreading propaganda in Egypt to convince Egyptians that it was a European affair and not their war to fight. Some Egyptian politicians, such as Ahmed Maher, were in favor of a swift declaration; most were more cautious.

Egyptian internal politics were in a period of transition during the early months of the war. The Egyptian Prime Minister, Muhammad Mahmud, resigned from office in August 1939, citing ill health. Mahmoud was well-liked by the British and Ambassador Lampson in particular.[29] The question of who should succeed him took on new urgency given the impending war.[30] The King chose Ali Maher, the Chief of the Royal Diwan. The British had mixed feelings about the new Prime Minister. Ali Maher was viewed as a dangerous presence in the Palace, with an unhealthy influence over the King. Grafftey-Smith unflatteringly described him as "a small ravenous wolf driven by furnace-heats of

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appealed to its rank and file, that is, which challenged the very basis of the Wafd in the country." Deeb, 422.

[29] Having been educated in Britain at Balliol College, Oxford, Mahmoud was comfortable with the British. Terry, 74.

[30] The choice was between Ahmed Maher and his brother, Ali Maher. Mahmoud had suggested to Lampson that this question ultimately hinged on "whether the King wished to govern with a Parliament or not. If with a Parliament it ought to be Ahmed Maher; if not, his brother, Ali Maher." Killearn Diaries, 3 July 1939. The British had reservations about both brothers. Lampson liked Ahmed Maher personally, writing that he "always liked the little man and I hold myself that he is the most sensible and sane of the whole crowd." Killearn Diaries, 20 June 1940. But the Wafd leader, Nahas, had accused him of involvement in a financial scandal, which hurt his popularity at this crucial time. He had also been implicated in the plot to assassinate Sir Lee Stack in the 1920s, which hurt his credibility with the British.

ambition."[31] Yet it was also recognized that he was extremely efficient and would be able to deliver on many of Britain's tough demands in wartime. The Embassy had to decide whether it preferred someone who was efficient and competent, such as Ali Maher, but also not completely pro-British, or someone who was loyal but may not be able to deliver what Britain needed. The British decided not to intervene in this decision. As the war progressed, and Ali Maher became more obstructionist toward British demands and more openly pro-German, the Embassy decided that his questionable loyalties far outweighed his efficiency.

Throughout the month of September 1939 Ambassador Lampson and Ali Maher had numerous meetings on the issue of a declaration of war. Lampson's personal diary provides insight into the negotiations between the two men on this issue, an exchange that Ali Maher ultimately won. At first he agreed to a declaration, but he then changed his mind, citing divisions within the Cabinet. He explained that the real reason for the delay was that the Germans were holding Egyptians in Germany until they had confirmation that the Germans in Egypt had been allowed to leave. Lampson and his staff discussed whether or not they should put pressure on Ali Maher, and the Embassy decided in the end that this might cause a split in the Cabinet and it was better to let the Prime Minister resolve the issue himself. [32]

Egyptian politicians were not united behind Ali Maher on this issue. Ali Maher's brother, Ahmed Maher, was the leader of the Saadist party and a strong supporter of an Egyptian declaration of war on both Germany and Italy. His position was based not on

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31 Laurence Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, 231.

32 Killearn Diaries, 7 Sept. 1939.

any great love for the Allied cause, but on the possible repercussions the absence of an Egyptian declaration of war might have on Egypt's national sovereignty. When Italy invaded Egyptian territory, Ahmed Maher urged the country to declare war, as failing to do so and allowing Britain to defend her "would amount to a recognition of a status of protectorate."[33] Egypt should defend herself or she might be put back in the same situation she was in during World War I with formal British control.

The Government of Egypt would normally raise issues with Britain via the British Ambassador in Cairo, who would then relay the requests to the Foreign Office. Yet Ali Maher often tried to bypass Lampson by working through Nashaat Pasha, the Egyptian Ambassador in London. By presenting his own view of events, Ali Maher hoped to counteract Embassy reports and drive a wedge between the Foreign Office and its representative on the spot. Both the Foreign Office and the Embassy were aware of this tactic, and the Foreign Office tried to discourage it. In 1939 there were rumors that Ali Maher was working to get both Lampson and Smart, the Oriental Counsellor, expelled from Egypt.[34] Ali Maher used this tactic again over the declaration of war, having Egypt's Ambassador in London suggest to Butler, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, that if Egypt did not declare war she could act as an intermediary for the purchase of American arms, an idea which Nashaat said enchanted Butler. Ali Maher had passed this information on to King Farouk, who said that they should act slowly and avoid getting drawn into the war. Another delaying tactic which Ali Maher used was to suggest that the

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[33] Lampson to Eden, Annual Review for 1940, 28 Jan. 1941, FO 371/27463.

[34] Prince Mohamed Ali, the heir to the throne, informed Lampson that Ali Maher was trying to avoid working with Lampson and instead work with Bateman, the Counsellor at the Embassy, "by means of intermediaries." Killearn Diaries, 21 Sept. 1939.

Egyptian Parliament needed to be convoked to declare war.[35]

The presence of additional British officials in Egypt due to the war, particularly the British military authorities, provided another opportunity for the Egyptian Government to try a policy of divide and conquer by driving a wedge between the Embassy and the British military. Ambassador Nashaat protested to the Foreign Office that "Ali Maher was being unduly hustled over the declaration of war" and that while the British military was "quite satisfied without it" the Embassy continued to insist on it.[36] In this instance Ali Maher was not only playing London off of Cairo, but British diplomatic representatives off of the British military authorities.

Although unwilling to actually declare war, the Ali Maher Government did declare martial law, break off diplomatic relations and commercial ties with Germany and institute press censorship.[37] Lampson and his staff questioned the need for an actual declaration of war, concluding that there were other issues that were more important, such as local stability. He consulted the Foreign Office to ask "whether they considered the declaration of a state of war by Egypt to be so important that it overrides other more local considerations, such as a united country..."[38] The Foreign Office and the British military authorities in Egypt insisted that an actual declaration was necessary. Faced with this pressure, Lampson decided at the end of September to confront the Egyptian Prime Minister. However, he wanted to be sure of Foreign Office support before taking a firm stance. He received what he considered to be a "good telegram" from the Foreign Office

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35 Killearn Diaries, 8 and 9 Sept. 1939.
36 Ibid., 19 Sept. 1939.
37 Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser, 42.
38 Killearn Diaries, 7 Sept. 1939.

that acknowledged the problems in Egypt and suggested that he examine "possible means of encouraging eventually the formation of a satisfactory Government..." Lampson reflected on this telegram in a lengthy diary entry in which he recorded his thoughts on the pros and cons of a change of government. Ali Maher's government was "thoroughly bad" and in peacetime would have been replaced, but war called for different responses. There had been many rumors of Ali Maher's anti-British feelings, and he had not come through on the declaration of war, but with that exception "Ali Maher has so far done everything we have asked him to do and done it extremely well and expeditiously..." Lampson confessed in his diary that "I should like nothing better than being authorised to go down and tell him exactly where he got off, if necessary saying the same thing to young Farouk." Yet he doubted whether the Foreign Office would really follow through with this: "We have found that out many times in the past,--brave words from the Office but when it comes down to brass tacks a tendency to slide out..."[39]

The British would face this same dilemma repeatedly during Ali Maher's time in office. On the one hand, he was efficient, especially compared to some of his predecessors. Lampson admitted that it would be difficult to find a good replacement for Ali Maher and that "We might dislike Ali Maher's system of internal administration but that was a secondary matter" compared with meeting war requirements.[40] Yet the British did not trust him, and Lampson did not feel comfortable sharing confidential intelligence with him, as he had with Mohamed Mahmoud, because he was convinced that the

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[39] Ibid., 29 Sept. 1939.
[40] Ibid., 28 Sept. 1939.

information would get to Germany.[41] Lampson also noted that some of the Opposition Parties had approached him about forming a new Government, but he felt strongly that "One must be loyal, at least up to a point, with the man who is at the moment at the helm. But he is so darned disloyal himself that the temptation to act otherwise has been strong."[42] These passages are illuminating of many aspects of Lampson's diplomacy in Egypt: his conviction that the King and Ali Maher would eventually have to be replaced, his hesitation to take action out of fear that the Foreign Office would not back him up, and his belief that they should, at least publicly, support the Government in power to avoid the appearance of British intervention, although he often intervened behind the scenes and indirectly through intermediaries.

The longer the issue dragged on, the more the Foreign Office came to agree with Lampson that perhaps an actual declaration was not necessary, as long as Egypt was willing to fulfill her treaty obligations. Forcing a declaration might lead to a showdown with Ali Maher, which had the potential to destabilize the country and upset Britain's goal of maintaining quiet in the Middle East. Egypt would also have expectations for post-war concessions on long-standing issues such as the presence of British troops in Egypt or the status of the Sudan in return for declaring war. Egyptian politicians began making suggestions for post-war demands they might make in return for Egypt's role in the war as soon as the fighting broke out. One British official explained, "…I always had a feeling that we might muddle through quite effectively without the declaration and have the compensation of having a grievance ourselves instead of having given the Egyptians

41 Lampson to Kelly, 20 Sept. 1939, FO 371/23307.

42 Killearn Diaries, 29 Sept. 1939.

one. The fact that individual Ministers tried to put conditions about Treaty modifications after the war, etc., supports this view."[43] Once the initial window of opportunity for a declaration had passed, Britain decided that it was better to be able to use the lack of a declaration as a means of quieting any calls for Treaty revision after the war.[44]

The decision to stop pushing Egypt for a declaration of war against Germany was not the end of the debate. When Italy appeared ready to declare war in 1940 Lampson and the service chiefs wanted Egypt to declare war simultaneously with Britain. Italy was an even more immediate threat to Egypt than Germany, given Italy's presence in Libya. Lampson asked the Foreign Office for authorization to again use pressure on the Egyptian Prime Minister, noting that he wanted to "have authority to act at once in the above sense and in the firmest manner, on the ground that in the case of Italy nothing short of a declaration of war would enable Egypt to fulfil her obligations under the Treaty of Alliance."[45] The Foreign Office agreed, but by the time Italy actually declared war on the Allies, the British decided against pressing Egypt for a declaration, feeling that "it was preferable to leave her to make up her own mind." Ali Maher announced that while Egypt would break off diplomatic relations with Italy, it would not take military action

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[43] Minute by Kelly, 4 Dec. 1939, FO 371/23307.

[44] Lampson believed that Ali Maher's failure to get a declaration of war also backfired against him personally. He could have used the declaration to take advantage of popular support for the Allies and silenced his opposition in Egypt by imposing an état de siège. By backing out, he opened the door for opposition intrigue, as the opposition parties viewed the conflict between Ali Maher and Britain as a sign that the government might fall. As Lampson noted, "In Egypt the tradition still persists that no Government can last without our support, and signs of dissension between us and any Government at once encourage every element of opposition to raise its head against the Cabinet which it hopes to oust in its own favour." The Wafd-Embassy intermediary, Amin Osman, who had a personal grudge against the Prime Minister, took this line. He convinced the Wafd leaders that Britain would be willing to see the état de siège vote fail because this would weaken Ali Maher and contribute to their goal of seeing the Prime Minister fall from power and the Wafd ultimately voted against the proposed état de siège. Lampson to Halifax, 8 Nov. 1939, FO 371/23307.

against Italy unless Egyptian territory was attacked.[46] At the same time his frequent meetings with Italy's Minister in Egypt caused concern among the British, and his delaying tactics in interning Italians and forcing Italian diplomats to leave the country were a crucial element in Britain's decision to urge Farouk to replace him as Prime Minister. The Prime Minister who replaced Ali Maher in 1940, Hassan Sabry, took a similar stance on this issue, but even when Italy invaded Egyptian territory in September 1940 refrained from formally declaring war.

The declaration of war continued to hang over Anglo-Egyptian relations. Lampson noted in April 1941 that the Foreign Office would probably still like to see Egypt pressured into entering the war, but as the Service Chiefs were satisfied with Egyptian cooperation and were not pressing for a greater commitment, he felt they had made the right decision. The Egyptians became even less willing to declare war when they started experiencing air raids in August 1941. Instead, there was a move to declare Cairo an "open city" to try and save it from bombing.[47]

Iraqi politics on the eve of war

The 1930s marked Iraq's transition from a British mandate into an independent state. The 1930 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, which came into effect in 1932, effectively ended Iraq's period of tutelage under British control.[48] Yet as was the case in Egypt, the new

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45 Lampson to Halifax, 12 April 1940, FO 371/24624.

46 Lampson to Eden, Annual Review for 1940, 28 Jan. 1941, FO 371/27463.

47 Killearn Diaries, 14 April 1941 and Lampson to FO, 10 Aug. 1941, FO 371/27431.

48 For Iraq during the Mandate period, see Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq, 1914-1932* (London: Ithaca Press for the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, 1976), and a recent edited collection: Nadine Meouchy and Peter Sluglett, eds. *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives* (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 2004). Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: the Failure of Nation-*

treaty included stipulations that guaranteed British influence in Iraq for years to come. While Egypt had the three-legged stool, the political situation in Iraq was more complex. Iraq had a monarch and was under British influence, but the country lacked a strong, nationalist party with popular support. Sectarian, ethnic and tribal issues also played an important role, as the minority Sunni governments often tried to use Kurdish and Shia tribes to swing the balance of power in their favor.

Crosthwaite of the Foreign Office's Eastern Department observed, "It is indeed a paradox that the Government of a rich and developed country like Egypt should be more amenable to our guidance than the poor and backward Iraq."[49] Britain's treaty with Iraq gave her certain rights in her former Mandate, but Iraq was less firmly under British influence by 1939 than Egypt. Britain's military presence in Iraq was limited to two Royal Air Force bases, and while Britain expected Iraq to purchase military supplies it needed from Britain if possible, she often proved unable to supply them. Events in other parts of the Arab world, especially Palestine and Syria, had a particularly strong effect on Iraqi internal politics and complicated Britain's relationship with her former Mandate.

Building and a History Denied (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), examines the British Mandate in Iraq through the lens of the 2003 invasion.

There are a number of indispensable general works on Iraq: Book I of Hanna Batatu's classic, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) provides an in-depth look at the social structure of Iraq and is especially valuable for this time period. Majid Khadduri, *Independent Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics since 1932* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), is still useful for the complexities of Iraqi politics from the end of the Mandate, particularly because he draws on interviews with many of the participants. Chapter 3 of D.K. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) provides a useful, concise overview of British policy in Iraq from the beginning of the Mandate through the 1958 revolution. Daniel Silverfarb's two volume study of British indirect rule in Iraq is also useful: Daniel Silverfarb, *Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East: A Case Study of Iraq, 1929-1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), and *The Twilight of British Ascendancy in the Middle East: A Case Study of Iraq, 1941-1950* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994). Stephen Longrigg, *'Iraq, 1900 to 1950* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), is of note because Longrigg was a British administrator in Iraq, and therefore this work offers the classic British interpretation of Iraqi history in the early twentieth century.

Finally, the Iraqi military was more of a force in Iraqi politics than the Egyptian military. From 1936-1941 a small group of military leaders served as the real power behind Iraqi politics, instigating military coups to place governments in power that were then beholden to their interests. While Britain, by treaty right, had great influence in Iraq, there was a general fear among British officials that Britain was losing the support of the Iraqi elite due to the unpopularity of Britain's Palestine policy, growing Arab nationalist sentiment that was hostile to European interference in the region, and weak British representation in the country.

The British viewed Iraq as a hopelessly divided country. These divisions fell along numerous lines: religious (Shia vs. Sunni Muslims as well as numerous minorities), ethnic (Arab vs Kurd with a Turkish minority in the north), and social ("townsmen" vs. "tribesmen"). Cornwallis's assessment from 1945 reflects the traditional British view:

> Unlike Egypt and the Levant, before the British occupation Iraq had been subject to almost no Western influences. The country consisted in fact of three of the most neglected provinces of a moribund empire. In addition, it was and is divided by secular feuds and differences -- the Shia still nurtures his 1,000-year-old resentment against the Sunni, the Kurd is antagonistic to the Arab, the Christian and Jewish communities (two of the most ancient of their kind in existence anywhere) are apprehensive of the Moslem majority. Townsmen have little in common with tribesmen, who are heavily armed and accustomed from time immemorial to resist by force any encroachment on their privileges. [50]

The divisions within Iraqi society went beyond religious and ethnic lines and had a number of repercussions for Iraqi politics. As Hanna Batatu explained in his seminal

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[49] Minute by Crosthwaite, 30 June 1939, FO 371/23210.

[50] Cornwallis to Eden, Cornwallis's valedictory, 30 March 1945, FO371/45302. Silverfarb's statistics on the Iraq population during this period are useful: "In 1941 Iraq had about 5 million inhabitants. The population was divided into various groups of which, roughly, Shiite Arabs constituted 51 percent; Sunni Arabs 20 percent; Kurds, nearly all of whom were Sunni, 19 percent; and Turks, Iranians, Christians, Jews, and Yazidis 10 percent. About one-third of the population lived in urban areas, primarily in Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul, the three largest cities." Silverfarb, *The Twilight of British Ascendancy,* 1.

work on the social classes of Iraq, the tension between urban and tribal populations under the Ottomans and during the Mandate continued in the post-independence period. While the towns had been in the ascendant in the nineteenth century, the British pursued a policy under the Mandate of bolstering tribal authority. This policy was in effect one of "divide and rule," balancing urban and rural areas and using the tribes to limit the power of the Iraqi monarchy and government. The British "anxious as they were to avoid the costly maintenance of a large force of occupation, saw in the balancing of tribesmen against townsmen the surest guarantee of the continuance of their own power." They were so successful in this that Batatu argues that "Down to the July 1958 Revolution, Iraq would thus remain legally subject to two norms-one for the cities and one for the tribal countryside."[51] Supporting tribal leaders served as a means of balancing the power of the Iraqi monarchy, yet as the Mulla Mustafa Kurdish revolt of 1943-1945 demonstrated, they could also serve as a destabilizing force in the new state.[52]

Iraq was also divided along regional lines. The three former Ottoman vilayats each had their own geographical orientation, reflecting their historical, commercial, and religious identities: "The ties of Mosul were with Syria and Turkey, and those of Baghdad and the Shi'i holy cities with Persia and the western and southwestern deserts. Basrah looked mainly to the sea and to India."[53] The division between the Shia Arab majority and Sunni Arab minority remained embedded in the administrative structure of the Ottoman provinces that would form Iraq: "To the strict Shi'is, the government of the day-the government of the Ottoman sultan that led Sunni Islam-was, in its essence, a

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51 Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movement of Iraq,* 24.

52 This revolt is discussed at length in chapter 9.

usurpation. In their eyes, it had not the qualification to even execute the laws of Islam. They were, therefore, estranged from it, few caring to serve it or to attend its schools."[54] As a result, few Shias served in administration under the Ottomans or attended the military colleges.

While the division of Iraqi society into what Batatu described as "a congeries of distinct, discordant, self-involved societies" might have served the interests of the people themselves, it was incompatible to the ideal of a centralized nation-state envisioned by the British under the Mandate.[55] The challenge facing the new Iraqi Government and its British advisers was how to promote the idea of an Iraqi nation, with loyalties over and above those of religion, ethnicity, region, and class. The British occupation during World War I, and the subsequent Iraqi opposition to the imposition of the Mandate, served as the catalyst for the development of a distinctly Iraqi national identity. Yet as Batatu points out, the new Iraqi nationalism "did not displace the old loyalties. Although it grew at their expense, it existed side by side with them, corroding them, yes, but at the same time absorbing some of their psychological elements and expressing itself within the emotional and conceptual patterns of the Islamic religion."[56]

The British under the Mandate perpetuated the tradition of Sunni political domination when they installed a Sunni Arab monarch on the throne of Iraq in 1921. King Faisal, the son of the Sharif Husayn of the Hejaz, had played an active role in the

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53 Batatu, 16.

54 Ibid., 17.

55 While British officials often portrayed Iraq as hopelessly fragmented, Batatu points out that these divisions and the affiliations to local communities served a useful purpose for individuals when the Iraqi provinces were ruled by the decentralized Ottoman state. Ibid., 21.

56 Ibid., 22.

Arab Revolt of World War I, but faced a new challenge as King of Iraq. Not only was he a foreigner, but he was put in power by the British.[57] During the early years of his rule in Iraq he was engaged in a balancing act, attempting to consolidate his power and establish his legitimacy while also trying to appease the British who supported him. Faisal himself recognized this challenge, as he explained to the British High Commissioner in 1921: "I am an instrument of British policy. His Majesty's Government and I are in the same boat and must sink or swim together."[58] The relationship between Faisal and Britain during the 1920s offers a classic example of the concept of indirect rule and the give and take of imperial patron-client relations.

Faisal's main base of support was among a group called the ex-Sharifian Officers, who formed a new elite in Iraq under the Mandate and would dominate Iraqi politics until the 1958 revolution.[59] These 300 men shared a similar background: almost all of them were Sunni Arabs who came from lower-middle or middle class families based in

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[57] Sir Harry C. Sinderson, *Ten Thousand and One Nights: Memories of Iraq's Sherifian Dynasty* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973) and Gerald de Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad, 1921-1958* (London: Hutchinson, 1961), provide sympathetic accounts of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq. Sinderson served as the physician to the royal family, while de Gaury was a British official who served in Iraq.

[58] Quoted in Batatu, 324. Batatu provides a useful analysis of the relationship between Faisal and Britain, the mutual obligations and benefits. Britain needed Faisal: "If only for financial reasons, they had to exercise their control indirectly and lull the Iraqis into a fictitious sense of independence." As Churchill explained in 1921: "I have no doubt personally…that Faisal offers far away [sic] best chance of saving our money." [325] At the same time, Faisal proved adept at manipulating this relationship in his own interests: "Suffering the buffets of the English on the one side and the national opposition on the other, Faisal could now enlarge the sphere of his authority only subtly and gradually. Inasmuch as the appearance of power is not completely separable from its substance, by clinging to the one, he acquired more and more of the other, edging the English, whenever opportunity offered, out of a degree after degree of their influence. Simultaneously, he kept his hand on the political pulse of the country and, while leaning on the ex-Sharifian officers--now the back-bone of Iraq's new army--he maintained contact with all existing forces and shades of opinion, and placed himself publicly above rivalries between parties, sects, or tribal combinations." [326]

[59] Batatu, Chapter 10 is useful for both the Iraqi monarchy and the ex-Sharifian officers. Reeva Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars: the Militarist Origins of Tyranny*, updated edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), particularly Chapter 2, explores the shared background of the ex-Sharifian officers and the development of their nationalist ideology in the inter-war period.

Baghdad and northern Iraq who had served in the Ottoman army. They drew their name from their ties with the family of Sharif Husayn, Faisal's father, during World War I. One group of officers supported the Arab Revolt and became associated with Sharif Husayn and Faisal early in the war. The other group joined Amir Faisal during his brief time as ruler of Syria immediately after the war. These different experiences proved to have important repercussions for the political loyalties of the ex-Sharifian officers.[60]

The ex-Sharifian officers followed Faisal to Iraq after his removal from the throne of Syria and formed the core of the Iraqi government. Despite their local origins, they faced strong opposition from traditional Iraqi elites in the 1920s, partly because they had been out of the country for so long that they were seen as being out of touch with local conditions, but most importantly because of their modest backgrounds. In the eyes of the local Iraqi elite, the ex-Sharifian officers were "upstarts."[61] Originally these officers proposed radical changes for Iraq, but gradually, through their leadership of the Iraqi military and government, they became entrenched within the very local elite they had opposed. By the outbreak of World War II, rather than being forces for change, the ex-Sharifian officers were "very much part of the agricultural and moneyed vested interests" and were associated with the status quo in Iraq.[62]

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60 Batatu, 319-320. For the Arab Revolt see Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East, 1916-1920* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992) and David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922*, 1st American edition (New York: H. Holt, 1989).

61 One former Iraqi Prime Minister, Tawfiq as-Suwaidi, shared with Batatu in 1965 the response of the local elite to the ex-Sharifian officers: "'Who is so and so that he should become a minister or a *mutasarrif*? His father was only a sergeant or a grocer,' they complained." Batatu, 322.

62 Ibid., 353. Batatu provides interesting figures on the land ownership and financial resources of the ex-Sharifian officers and the Iraqi monarchy, accumulated in a relatively short period of time after their return to Iraq. [352-353]

After the death of King Faisal in 1933, the weakened Iraqi monarchy became increasingly reliant on British support. King Faisal's son, King Ghazi, was initially quite popular with the Iraqi people, but he lacked his father's political experience and could not influence local politics to the same extent. While Feisal had successfully balanced the various political factions and ensured peaceful transitions between governments, Ghazi lacked this ability and "he became, not the controller of political currents, but their instrument." The weakened palace, no longer able to fulfill this equalizing role, was unable to ensure that governments should take and leave office by peaceful, parliamentary means. Instead, in the late 1930s Iraq turned to "extra-parliamentary methods."[63] In 1936 Iraq experienced "the Arab world's first military coup.[64] Iraqi politics in the period 1936-1941 would be characterized by military intervention and repeated coups, as politicians held office only with the support of the Iraqi military. The ex-Sharifian officers would dominate Iraqi politics and the military after the 1936.[65]

King Ghazi's reign was abruptly cut short on April 4, 1939 when he died after hitting an electric light pole while driving his car. The King's death led to widespread

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63 Newton to Halifax, 17 Jan. 1940, FO 371/24557. The position of the Palace was so weak by early 1939, that when Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri as-Said proposed sending King Ghazi on "a long European holiday" as a means of cleaning up the Palace and having a stronger member of the royal family, Amir Zeid, run it in his absence, the British Ambassador agreed that they should allow this to happen: "We ought not to demur if Ghazi is pushed entirely into the background (just as the Japanese Emperors were in the Shogun period) and the virtual direction of affairs left to Zeid, or a council of state." The Foreign Office felt, however, that Ghazi did provide some stability and should be left on his throne, although he "appears so unfitted for the exercise of any real political influence that we can hardly object to anything the Iraqi Govt may see fit to do to keep him under strict control." Peterson to Oliphant, 31 Dec. 1938 and Minute by Crosthwaite, 10 Jan. 1939, FO 371/23207.

64 Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 11. For the coups of the late 1930s, see Majid Khadduri, *Independent Iraq*. Mohammad A. Tarbush, *The Role of the Military in Politics: A Case Study of Iraq to 1941* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1982), is useful for the Iraqi army's forays into politics.

speculation about British complicity and a murder plot. Public mourning in Mosul soon turned violent with the murder of the British consul, Monck-Mason. In the investigations that followed the British seized pamphlets stating that the British had murdered the king. The students arrested for distributing these pamphlets all belonged to an anti-British group led by Dr. Jordon, the German former director of Antiquities in Iraq and the local Nazi party leader.[66] Despite British efforts to quell these rumors, long after the war it remained widely believed that the British, assisted by Nuri, were behind the King's death.[67] These violent protests and the murder of the British Consul brought home the reality of anti-British sentiment and the power of the pro-German movement within Iraq to the British on the eve of World War II.

Ghazi's death led to the issue of succession, as his son was only a child.[68] Amir Abdul Illah was chosen to serve as Regent. The British saw him as weak but friendly. The British Ambassador, Maurice Peterson, described him as having "a certain charm of manner…but I doubt whether he has any capacity at all, even could some more serious occupation than horse-racing or the illegal pursuit of gazelle in motor-cars be found for him."[69] The Iraqi monarchy as a political force was further weakened, providing even

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65 Batatu gives a sense of the prominent position of the ex-Sharifian officers in the Iraqi military: "out of the total of 19 senior army officers who had an active status in 1936, 12 were ex-Sharifians, including 3 out of the 3 major generals, 3 out of the 4 brigadiers, and 6 out of the 11 colonels." Batatu, 334.

66 On the Monck-Mason murder, see Houstoun-Boswall to FO, 4 April 1939 and 6 April 1939, FO 371/23200; and RAF Monthly Intelligence Summary, Iraq, April 1939, FO 371/23213.

67 Batatu, writing in the 1970s, discussed the "doubts that still surround the incident," in particular focusing on the suspicion that Ghazi's death was plotted by Nuri, the future Regent, and his sister, Ghazi's wife. Batatu, 343-344. See also Reeva Simon, 43.

68 The choice of Regent was between the Amir Abdul Illah and Azir Zeid. While Peterson preferred the latter, he was considered inappropriate due to his unsuitable, controlling, pro-German wife, while Amir Abdul Illah was, in the opinion of the Foreign Office, "at least harmless." Houstoun-Boswall to FO, 6 April 1939 and Minute by Crosthwaite, 11 April 1939, FO 371/23201.

69 Peterson to Oliphant, 31 Dec. 1938, FO 371/23207.

greater scope for intervention on the part of both the British and the Iraqi military.

Iraq and the Declaration of War Debate

The Prime Minister of Iraq at the outbreak of war, Nuri as-Said, is one of the most significant figures in twentieth-century Iraqi politics.[70] Born in Iraq, Nuri attended an Ottoman military college in Istanbul and served in the Ottoman military before World War I, when he left to support Prince Feisal in the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans. After the war he remained with Feisal and held a number of official positions, including that of Prime Minister in 1930, when the Anglo-Iraqi treaty was signed.[71] Nuri as-Said returned to power as Prime Minister in December, 1938 as a result of another military coup.[72] He had a reputation for being pro-British, and many British officials were pleased to see him back at the head of the Iraqi government. British Air Staff Intelligence, for

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[70] There are a number of useful works on Nuri's background. Christopher Birdwood, *Nuri as-Said: A Study in Arab Leadership* (London: Cassell, 1959), is a sympathetic full-length biography. Majid Khadduri's sketch of Nuri in Chapter 3 of *Arab Contemporaries: The Role of Personalities in Politics* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) examines Nuri as a representative of what Khadduri calls the "realistic school" of politics, emphasizing that Nuri "possessed the flexible mind of a practical politician." [p. 21] Batatu's portrayal of Nuri is more critical, emphasizing the extent to which his ties to the British Embassy undermined his local authority and his reputation for "unscrupulousness…Some of his rivals were literally terrified of him." [Chapter 10]

[71] While Nuri worked closely with King Faisal, he and King Ghazi disliked each other intensely. Nuri resented the King's unwillingness to support him during the Bakr Sidqi coup, and also on a more personal basis, blamed him for his son's injuries. Nuri's son, Sabah, was a member of the Iraqi Air Force and the King asked him to take up in his plane a member of the Palace who had never flown, overreacted, and caused Sabah to crash. His injuries left him unfit for military service. Unsigned Foreign Office "Notes on the recent change of Government in Iraq," 3 Jan. 1939, FO 371/23200.

[72] Nuri's pragmatism extended to his relations with the Iraqi army. While, on the one hand, he strongly believed that the army should stay out of politics and, in the words of Majid Khadduri, was "horrified" at the 1936 coup, on the other hand he allowed himself to be restored to power with the support of the army in 1938. Khadduri, *Arab Contemporaries*, 37-38. Eppel described Nuri's new government in 1938 as "an unholy alliance between himself—the veteran pro-British politician identified with the Iraqi-British treaty of 1930—and the group of anti-British, nationalist officers. The alliance was the combined result of Nuri's skill at political maneuvering and the comparative insecurity of The Seven [the military officers behind the coup] who themselves lacked political experience and were apprehensive of Britain's possible reaction…they shared the accepted view of Nuri al-Sa'id as the politician most active in working for Arab unity—and that, after all was the lodestar of their vision." Michael Eppel, *The Palestine Conflict*

example, noted that he was "one of the most trusted and popular figures in 'Iraq political life."[73] Ambassador Peterson was more reserved in his assessment.[74]

As in Egypt, British officials in Iraq were eager to have the country quickly declare war on Germany. They based their request on the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, which bound Britain and Iraq to support each other in the case of war. With a pro-British Prime Minister in power, they did not expect any difficulty in achieving this goal. Yet Iraq hesitated to issue the declaration. When war appeared imminent, Prime Minister Nuri presented the Government of Iraq's interpretation of their obligations to Britain in a broadcast speech. Iraq's aid to Britain "will consist in furnishing to His Britannic Majesty on Iraq territory all facilities and assistance in his power, including the use of railways, rivers, ports, aerodromes, and means of communication." This aid had limitations, as Iraq "is bound only to afford all facilities in the form of transportation and communications to Great Britain inside Iraq and is not bound to take part in war on any front."[75] There was therefore a discrepancy in how Britain and Iraq interpreted this provision of the treaty: Britain assumed that a declaration of war was implied, Iraq disagreed.[76]

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in the History of Modern Iraq: The Dynamics of Involvement 1928-1948 (Ilford, Essex: Frank Cass, 1994), 81.

73 RAF Monthly Intelligence Summary Iraq, Dec. 1938, FO 371/23213.

74 Peterson observed that Nuri "is no longer the man he was. It is possible that the lack of balance and instability of temperament which he has shown since his last term of office are largely attributable to chagrin at his humiliation at the time of the coup d'état of October 1936…his readiness to participate in yet another military coup…to overthrow a well-intentioned and successful administration which had given him no personal or public justification for such a course does not inspire confidence." Peterson to Halifax, 27 Dec. 1938, FO 371/23200.

75 Nuri as-Said's speech of 1 Sept. 1939, quoted in Khadduri, *Independent Iraq*, 141.

76 According to Iraqi historian Mahmoud al-Durra, Nuri wanted to declare war and approached the British Ambassador, along with his Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Jawdat, to inform him that Iraq would declare war when Britain did. However, the Iraqi army officers who had helped return Nuri to power disapproved of this step, as did some of the government Ministers, who argued that the treaty did not require it. The Iraqi government appointed a group of officials, including the British Adviser to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and a member of the British Embassy staff, to study the issue within the

Iraq did not declare war, but it did take action to adhere to its treaty obligations and ensure internal security. Iraq broke off diplomatic relations with Germany, deported or interned and then turned over to Britain Germans residing in the country, and imposed censorship. The government declared a state of emergency, giving the Minister of the Interior special powers to deal with foreigners, and issuing a decree giving the government greater economic control.[77] The Foreign Office was disappointed with the lack of a formal declaration of war, but it acknowledged that "conduct such as toleration of British forces on Iraqi territory in time of war, to say nothing of further measures taken by Iraqi Government such as interning and deporting German nationals...is of so unneutral a character as to mean that for all practical purposes a state of war between Iraq and Germany must and does exist." Even without a declaration, Britain would treat Iraq as a belligerent, placing troops in the country under the treaty.[78]

Britain's failure to get an Iraqi declaration of war reflected both Nuri's unstable position as Prime Minister and growing anti-British sentiment in Iraq. Nuri might have been pro-British and open to the idea of a declaration of war, but many of his officials and the army officers who helped to put him in power in 1938 were not. Iraq had a number of grievances against Britain. Some of these frustrations had to do with the nature of Anglo-Iraqi relations under the treaty. Iraq was bound to obtain military supplies from

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context of international law. The committee concluded that a declaration of war was not necessary and as a result Nuri only severed diplomatic relations with Germany. Mahmud al-Durra, *Al Harb al-Iraqiya al-Britaniya*. [The Iraqi-British War] (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'rifah Tarikh, 1982), 88-89.

77 Khadduri, *Independent Iraq*, 142-143.

78 FO to Newton, 9 Sept. 1939, FO 371/23211.

Britain, yet Britain proved to be unable to provide them.[79] Other issues reflected Iraqi anger with the regional situation, in particular British policy in Palestine and the continued French mandate in Syria and Lebanon. Iraq had a long-standing interest in the Palestine issue. It sent funds, arms, and volunteers during the 1936-1939 Arab revolt, and welcomed Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem, to Iraq in October 1939.[80] Finally, the 1930s saw a growing pro-German sentiment in Iraq.[81] For all these reasons, the Prime Minister found himself engaged in a delicate balancing act between British and Iraqi nationalist demands.

Britain's Adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior, C.J. Edmonds, partly attributed the failure to get an Iraqi declaration to Ambassador Newton's personality and the way in which he dealt with Iraqis. Nuri as-Said and Ali Jawdat presented a note to the Ambassador, stating that relations with Germany would be broken off and the German Minister asked to leave, but first they wanted assurance that Britain would help to defend Iraq if attacked and aid Iraq with any financial difficulties that might result from the war. They also wanted to be assured of a seat at the Peace Conference. Edmonds considered

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79 For the debates over the supply of arms and the economic issues relating to the supply of credit and Iraqi oil, see Silverfarb, *Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East,* chapters 8-10.

80 The Mufti had been exiled from Palestine to Lebanon during the Arab Revolt. For a detailed study of Iraq and the Palestine issue, see Michael Eppel, *The Palestine Conflict in the History of Modern Iraq.* Majid Khadduri gives a biographical sketch of the Mufti in Chapter 5 of his work, *Arab Contemporaries.* Khadduri uses the Mufti as an example of "the traditional (idealistic) school" of politics, one who "chose to play the political game in accordance with traditional methods," in this case drawing on religious authority. Khadduri, 68.

81 Many of the ex-Sharifian officers who dominated Iraqi politics had been trained in the military schools of the Ottoman Empire which were based on the German model. It was therefore natural that, after World War I, they would turn to Germany for inspiration: "Secularly educated, the officers and the ex-Ottoman bureaucrats who joined them, drew upon their Istanbul educational experience and subsequent wartime events in order to devise their own ideology. Like their Turkish colleagues, they too turned to Germany as a model. For unlike the British and the French who deceived the Arabs during the war, the Germans neither colonized nor occupied the Middle East, nor were they responsible for the fragmentation of the area." Reeva Simon, 26.

Newton's response to be “unfortunate,” as he brushed off the note and complained that Iraq had put off declaring war for too long. Newton was “querulous and petulant” and felt that “The Iraqi Government had missed the bus.” Edmonds concluded that Newton’s “precise...mentality is quite unadapted to understanding the working of the Oriental mind.”[82]

Despite having a friendly government in power, Britain was unable to get the declaration of war it desired. Given these concerns and the strength of local intrigues against Nuri from the beginning, the British were faced with a question they also dealt with in Egypt: how far should they go to support a government in power that was pro-British or at least cooperative in the war effort when it was not popular locally? After King Ghazi’s death in April 1939, Iraq experienced a period of general insecurity and tension, and the Charge d’Affaires at the British Embassy reported to the Foreign Office that the staff felt, given the circumstances, that “it is of the highest importance that we should do nothing to embarrass General Nuri or to weaken his position within the Cabinet…If General Nuri were to lose control of the situation it might very easily and without warning get out of hand.”[83] They were particularly concerned by the fact that some members of his Cabinet were strong nationalists with pro-German tendencies. By September, Ambassador Newton offered a different perspective, noting that while it would be hard to find a more pro-British Prime Minister “…it would hardly be wise to try to bolster him up. As opportunity offers I propose…merely to emphasise that unity is of special importance in the present situation and that *if* changes eventually seem

82 Edmonds Diaries, 6 Sept. 1939.

83 Houstoun-Boswall to FO, 6 April 1939, FO 371/23200.

necessary, they should of course take place constitutionally and with minimum disturbance or bad feeling."[84] Baggallay at the Foreign Office disagreed, noting that Nuri might be replaced by a less cooperative government that may lead Britain to have to intervene, in which case it might be best to keep Nuri in office "and avoid the much more extensive use of our influence which would be necessary if he disappeared."[85] The issue was whether the status quo would best be maintained by supporting the government or letting it fall.

Iraq's refusal to declare war on Germany was one symptom of Nuri's declining influence in Iraq. After a few months Nuri's new government appeared to be weak and too beholden to the interests of the small group of military leaders who supported him to be an effective force. Nuri was in power not because he had widespread support, but because there seemed to be no alternative: "Nuri remains in office because of his Army backing, while the Army Higher Command remains intact because of Nuri. The government survives, not because it has the confidence of the electorate behind it, but because there is no composite body of politicians with sufficient unity of purpose to replace it."[86]

Nuri's government finally fell in March 1940. In stark contrast to Egypt, where the British Embassy was a vital force in Egyptian politics and took an active interest in any change of government, Britain's hand was surprisingly absent from the political maneuverings in Baghdad in the period after the 1936 coup. Nuri's government fell due to internal divisions within his Cabinet and shifting alliances among the military officers

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84 Newton to FO, 30 Sept. 1939, FO 371/23202.

85 Minute by Baggallay, 5 Oct. 1939, FO 371/23202.

who put him in power and acted behind the scenes. The context of the war and growing anti-British sentiment contributed to the sense of instability, but neither British nor Iraqi sources cite British interference as a factor in Nuri's fall from power.[87] Britain was active in Iraqi economic affairs, had two small bases in the country, advisers in key Iraqi ministries, and an Embassy that closely followed internal political developments, but Britain's relative power or desire to actually determine the course of politics in Iraq before 1941 was limited, particularly when compared to the situation in Egypt. Edmonds noted that this change of government was significant because it was the first to occur "without military or tribal intervention for I suppose six years," to which one might add that it took place without British intervention as well.[88]

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[86] RAF Monthly Intelligence Summary Iraq, Nov. 1939, FO 371/23213.

[87] Silverfarb notes that "Since independence in 1932 the British government had never interfered in Iraqi politics to the extent of attempting to oust a prime minister." Silverfarb, *Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East*, 118; Longrigg, Chapters 7-8; Khadduri, *Independent Iraq*, Chapters 5-6.

[88] Edmonds Diaries, 31 March 1940. The fall of Nuri's government was due to a number of complex internal developments. The Minister of Finance, Rustam Haidar, was murdered in January 1940, and Nuri had two former Cabinet Ministers arrested for complicity in the murder. Nuri himself cited Rustam's murder as precipitating deep divisions within the Iraqi Cabinet. Khadduri, *Independent Iraq*, 147. After an unsuccessful attempt in February to reorganize his cabinet, in March 1940 Nuri as-Said turned power over to a new government in which he retained the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs while relinquishing the premiership to Rashid Ali, the former head of the Diwan at the Iraqi Palace. FO 371/24558. Nuri himself supported Rashid Ali's appointment as Prime Minister, and the Iraqi military officers were active behind the scenes.

Nuri also suffered from recurring health problems, which played a role as well. Ambassador Newton had noted that Nuri would probably be glad to leave office "if he were not afraid that he would be victimised by his enemies so soon as he ceased to be an authority." Newton to Halifax, 8 Dec. 1939, FO 371/23202. Iraqi personality politics led to an endless cycle of coups and retribution, making those in office even more anxious to hold on to power. During the cabinet shuffle of February 1940, Nuri was able to purge Cabinet members who opposed his policies and then choose his own successor, Rashid Ali. Nuri's renewed popularity and strength after the events of February allowed him to leave office without losing influence and by ensuring that many of his supporters would remain in office he was assured that his policies would be continued under the new administration. Newton to Halifax, 3 April 1940, FO 371/24558. He was able to escape the cycle of retribution facing former Ministers by putting in place a Cabinet that he had a role in constructing and he was now free to pursue his foreign policy objectives.

PART II: "PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER 1"[1]

Chapter 4: The Rashid Ali Administration in Iraq and the 1941 Coup

Despite their varied backgrounds, British officials serving in Egypt and Iraq shared a conviction that Middle Eastern politics was inherently personal, and they valued personal contacts as the most effective way to influence local policy makers. As a result, these officials often focused on individuals as the root cause of all problems, overlooking the larger structural issues involved. As one member of the Egyptian Department noted, "There has always been a tendency in the Residency or Embassy at Cairo to have some 'Public Enemy No. 1'" and there was a similar tendency in Iraq.[2] During the early years of World War II Britain's "Public Enemy No.1" in Egypt was Prime Minister Ali Maher. In Iraq it was his counterpart, Rashid Ali, who replaced Nuri as-Said as Prime Minister in March 1940. Officials believed that if only these leaders could be removed from power, relations would improve. And yet by focusing on these individuals, the British raised the stakes and turned their resignations into an issue of prestige, and masked the underlying issues that were causing local discontent. Britain's response to the crises facing Egypt and Iraq during the early years of the war reflects the full implications of this attitude for official British policy. Even after removing their "Public Enemy No. 1" from power in

[1] British officials used this term to refer to Iraqi Prime Minister Rashid Ali and Egyptian Prime Minister Ali Maher during the early years of World War II, see for example a minute by Kelly, 28 Feb. 1939, FO371/23304. Ironically, this term would be applied to Britain after the Suez Crisis! Wm. Roger Louis, "Public Enemy Number One: Britain and the United Nations in the Aftermath of Suez," in *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (London: Tauris, 2006), 696.

both Egypt and Iraq, they still faced a number of larger challenges, including the rise of local opposition sparked by their own intervention.

In 1941 and 1942, the situation in the Middle East was serious enough to convince British officials in Egypt and Iraq to risk upsetting the status quo and intervene with force. This intervention took different forms: in Iraq a British occupation, and in Egypt the dramatic showdown at Abdin Palace on February 4, 1942 that stopped short of the use of force. Both interventions had roots in a common problem: how to convince local governments to cooperate on removing fifth columnists, Germans, and Italians from positions of influence in these countries. The results were quite different.[3] Why did these showdowns result in an all-out occupation in Iraq, but not in Egypt? Both interventions addressed Britain's short-term war aims, but had the long-term effect of increasing local resentment against the British. The Rashid Ali coup and Abdin Palace Incident were crucial steps along the road to revolution in the 1950s.

British officials viewed developments in Iraq through the lens of their belief that personal loyalties and rivalries were the most important factor in internal politics. These deep-seated personal ties among Iraq's political elite often dated back to shared experiences in Ottoman military colleges or service in the Sherif's army under Feisal during WWI, reflecting a real continuity in Iraqi political and military leadership.[4] In January 1940 Ambassador Newton provided his own perception of Iraqi politics:

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[2] Minute by Kelly, 28 Feb. 1939, FO 371/23304.

[3] While this study focuses on Iraq and Egypt, it is useful to keep in mind that Britain was facing similar issues in Iran at the same time. In Iran the result was the joint Anglo-Soviet occupation of the country in autumn 1941 and the abdication of the Shah of Iran in favor of his son.

[4] See Reeva Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars: the Militarist Origins of Tyranny*.

> Iraqi politics are to an especial degree an affair of personalities and professionalism. From the first the sweets of office have been the perquisite of a group of politicians, too numerous to share out Cabinet portfolios amongst themselves by agreement, yet too similar in their general political outlook to be really divided by anything save jealousy of those of their number who for the moment have secured better and more remunerative positions than the rest, and the determination that no particular group within their group shall enjoy a monopoly of office. The question in Iraqi politics has always been how to sort out and adjust these conflicting claims, and to ensure that all the various politicians shall have their turn in office with the minimum of inconvenience and damage to the state.[5]

By unraveling these personal relationships, the argument went, Britain could effectively influence local politics.[6]

In March 1940, the pro-British Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri as-Said fell from power and was replaced by Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, the Chief of the Royal Diwan at the Palace. Rashid Ali came from one of the most prominent religious families in Baghdad. He was, as historian Reeva Simon pointed out, "a locally trained provincial" compared to the ex-Sharifian Officers who had lived and studied in the Ottoman capital.[7] After attending the Baghdad School of Law, he served as a judge and then entered politics, even serving as Prime Minister in the 1930s.[8]

Before Nuri's government fell, the Regent, concerned by growing army intervention in political affairs, called a meeting of all former Prime Ministers of Iraq.

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5 Newton to Halifax, 17 Jan. 1940, FO 371/24557.

6 While the British saw these political maneuvers as nothing more than personal quests for power and influence, historian Reeva Simon sees larger issues at play as well. The post-1936 coups seemed to be "a continuation of the personal politics which characterized the first few years of Iraqi independence," but there was also "an undercurrent of internecine ideological struggle within the officer corps itself, which represented, over the long view, an attempt to chart Iraq's relations with the rest of the Arab world." Simon, 128.

7 Although Rashid Ali came from an influential family in Baghdad, he grew up in poverty because his father married "beneath his station" and was cut off from the family as a result. Ibid., 145.

8 For a useful, if critical, biographical sketch of Rashid Ali, see Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 205-210.

Majid Khadduri attributes this initiative to Rashid Ali in his position as the Regent's chief political adviser. Rashid Ali was onvinced that the chronic factionalism among politicians had led to army intervention in the first place, and he hoped to persuade political leaders to avoid turning to the army to resolve their conflicts in the future. The leaders signed an agreement in which they promised to form a coalition government and give it their support.[9] As a result, Rashid Ali's new Cabinet included four former Prime Ministers, with Nuri taking the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, the symbiotic relationship between the Iraqi army and politicians was so firmly ingrained in the political system that this effort proved a failure.

At first Rashid Ali pursued a conciliatory policy with the British, informing C.J. Edmonds, the Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, that "He might be known as a strong nationalist but that did not make him any the less a faithful adherent of the alliance. He hoped the Ambassador and I would regard him as a personal friend, not just a P.M., with whom we could talk frankly and without reserve."[10] Yet it soon became apparent to the British that he would not be wholly cooperative on the war effort. Prime Minister Rashid Ali refused to break off relations with Italy, arguing that the Treaty did not require them to do so.[11]

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9 Majid Khadduri, *Independent Iraq*, 152-153.

10 Edmonds Diaries, 1 April 1940.

11 Edmonds, with his daily contact with officials within the Iraqi Government, recorded in his diary the various internal reasons for delay in acting on Italy's declaration of war. Foreign Minister Nuri proposed breaking off relations with Italy on June 11, but the Cabinet objected. One Iraqi official told Edmonds that the decision was held up due to the Cabinet not wanting to be rushed by Nuri and "a desire to show that they are not merely ditto men to H.M.G. but to choose their own time and reason," frustration with Britain's failure to supply arms to the Iraqi army, and "(though he did not put it so directly or crudely) blackmail over Syria and Palestine." Edmonds Diaries, 23 June 1940. Another contact told Edmonds that the real power behind the decision not to break off relations with Italy was what Edmonds called the

In what would become a recurring theme throughout Rashid Ali's administration, he explained that he could not offer more open support to the Allies unless "he could at the same time declare the establishment of an agreed policy between the Allies and the Arabs for the realisation of Arab ideals", by which he meant a settlement of the Palestine issue and independence for Syria and Lebanon.[12] Palestine was Iraq's trump card, and the price Britain would have to pay for full support. Ambassador Newton refused to consider making any concessions to Iraq regarding Syria and Palestine until a more amenable government was in place.[13] Britain continued to apply pressure unsuccessfully to Rashid Ali, and Iraq's relations with Italy remained a point of contention up to the 1941 coup.

The fall of France in June 1940 signaled a real change in Iraq's response to the war. Repeated Allied setbacks in the summer of 1940 convinced local leaders that Britain was on the losing side, and reinforced the deep-seated pro-German sentiment of the Iraqi army.[14] The German-style education that the senior officers in the Iraqi army had received in the Ottoman military colleges before World War I and the aggressive German propaganda campaign undertaken by the German Minister to Iraq, Franz Grobba, fostered this pro-German sentiment in Iraq.[15] Iraqi frustration with British intransigence on the Palestine issue pushed Iraq even closer to Germany. Pro-German sentiment in Iraq was

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"Sinister Quadrumvirate," the four army officers also known as the "Golden Square." Edmonds Diaries, 27 June 1940.

12 Newton to Halifax, 20 May 1940, FO 371/24558. For the importance of the Palestine issue to Iraq during this period, see Michael Eppel, *The Palestine Conflict in the History of Modern Iraq: The Dynamics of Involvement 1928-1948*.

13 Newton to FO, 26 June 1940, FO 371/24558.

14 Majid Khadduri explains that Iraqi leaders concluded that "England had no chance of survival…To these leaders the Anglo-'Iraqi alliance had become a liability which put the very existence of their country in jeopardy rather than an asset." Majid Khadduri, "General Nuri's Flirtations with the Axis Powers," *Middle East Journal* 16:3 (Summer 1963), 333.

first and foremost a means of protesting British imperial intervention in Iraq on the principle of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." As Albert Hourani explained of pro-German Iraqis: "many of them did not in their hearts believe German rule to be better than British, but most were deeply influenced by the myth of German invincibility and thought it would be best to propitiate the future ruler of the world while there was still time; others knew only that they were tired of British domination and did not think what might come after so long as it was something new."[16]

Iraqi leaders thus began making overtures to both Germany and Italy during the summer and fall of 1940. Under the pretext of official talks regarding the war, Iraq sent Nuri as-Said and Naji Shawkat to Turkey. Naji Shawkat met with a German representative and presented a letter from the Mufti of Jerusalem, then residing in Baghdad. Even Nuri as-Said sent out feelers to the Axis powers, but his pro-British reputation made them suspicious and his overtures were ultimately spurned.[17] While Germany's official policy was to leave Axis relations with the Middle East to Italy, in

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15 For Grobba's activities in Iraq, see Reeva Simon, 31-40 and Edgar Flacker, *Fritz Grobba and Nazi Germany's Middle Eastern Policy 1933-1942*.

16 Hourani 1943 Report. Noting the complex motives behind this allegiance, Reeva Simon argues: "To be sure, there were some pro-Nazi Iraqis, but the army officers who turned to Germany were not Nazis. Indeed, they tended to overlook the racial ideology that placed them one step above the Jews and looked instead to those areas of compatibility they had formed with the Germany of Wilhelm II when German ideas, especially cultural nationalism, reached them in Istanbul, at the military schools where the Iraqi officers received their first taste of Westernization at the hands of German military officers." [xii]

17 Majid Khadduri's account of these activities, "General Nuri's Flirtations with the Axis Powers," is based on German documents and interviews with Nuri. Reeva Simon, in exploring the question of whether Nuri "was playing a double game," supports Jon Kimche's argument, also based on German documents, that Nuri lied in his interview with Majid Khadduri and did in fact know about the Iraqi government's negotiations with Germany through the Mufti. Simon, 132.

October 1940, Germany made a public declaration of a new Arab policy that included German and Italian support for Arab independence.[18]

Both the Embassy and the Foreign Office worried that Rashid Ali was going too far. At the end of September 1940 one Foreign Office official noted that "I have an uneasy feeling that we are allowing Iraq to drift too freely towards the Axis…We are watching, but we are not taking a sufficiently positive and firm line to deter them." The Foreign Office then began reconsidering its whole policy toward Iraq in light of what they saw as Rashid Ali's obstructionism.[19] The Chiefs of Staff committee in London suggested they use pressure tactics to encourage Iraq to fulfill its treaty requirements, including a "vigorous diplomatic offensive, supported by propaganda and if feasible bribery, and aimed at convincing Iraq that we shall win the war and that an anti-British policy on her part will have dangerous consequences."[20] This campaign would include replacing the Prime Minister, cutting Iraqi relations with Italy, controlling propaganda, and suppressing the activities of the Mufti, as well as using economic and financial pressure, taking advantage of the fact that the British Empire was the largest purchaser of Iraqi goods and Iraq was dependent on British shipping.[21] In line with this policy, Britaih

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[18] The declaration stated "Germany has always sympathised with the Arab question and hoped that the Arabs will one day regain their position in the world which will honour their race and their great history. The German Government has followed with interest the struggle for independence in the Arab countries. In that struggle the Arabs can rely unhesitatingly on the entire Germany sympathy. In this declaration Germany is in full accord with her ally Italy." 21 October 1940, FO 371/24549. The background to this declaration is discussed in detail in chapter 2 of Geoffrey Warner, *Iraq and Syria 1941* (London: Davis-Poynter, 1974). For the negotiations between Naji Shawkat and representatives of the Mufti with German and Italian officials and the background to this declaration, see Lukasz Hirszowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), Chapter 5.

[19] Minute by Coverley-Price, 30 Sept. 1940 and Minute by Baxter, 19 Oct. 1940, FO 371/24558.

[20] War Cabinet Chiefs of Staff Committee, Draft report on the situation in Iraq, 24 Oct. 1940, FO 371/24558.

[21] Ibid.

stopped Iraq from exchanging its currency into dollars and the shipment of goods under the credits agreement in December 1940.[22]

The Government of Iraq's increasingly anti-British attitude caused relations with the Embassy to deteriorate. Rashid Ali complained that Newton had openly told Iraqis that he was not pleased with his government.[23] Ambassador Newton reported to the Foreign Office in November that Rashid Ali "had now lost the confidence of His Majesty's Government in his ability to collaborate with them," a serious accusation to be made by any diplomatic representative against a host government.[24] On November 27th Newton told Nuri: "The patience of His Majesty's Government was exhausted and they were now convinced that whatever his intentions might be, Prime Minister was not able to collaborate effectively with them…"[25] The British charges against Rashid Ali included Iraq's continued relations with Italy and the Prime Minister's unwillingness to cooperate with Britain on influencing the tone of the Iraqi press and public opinion.[26]

In response to this strong language, Iraqi government then decided to go over the head of the Embassy and telegraphed the Iraqi Legation in London with a protest to be

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[22] The Iraqi Charge d'Affaires in London, Ata Amin, met with Foreign Secretary Eden in January 1941 to complain about this policy, to which Eden replied that Britain had to give her limited dollars first to her "loyal Allies": "in these matters we served first our friends, whose loyalty had been proved beyond doubt." Eden offered to reexamine the issue only after Iraq changed its policy "and showed the marked friendship and loyal co-operation we were entitled to expect." FO to Newton, 9 Jan. 1941, FO 624/22. Man, the Assistant Oriental Secretary, noted that this policy had some influence: "Although slow to take effect, these measures certainly contributed during January to the desertion of Rashid Ali by his colleagues." Draft telegram from M. Man, Assistant Oriental Secretary, undated [Feb. 1941], FO 624/19. For the British debate over applying economic pressure on Iraq, see Silverfarb, *Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East*, pp. 118-120.

[23] Edmonds Diaries, 12 Aug. 1940. One of Rashid Ali's supporters told Edmonds that Rashid Ali was willing to help the British but was held back by his colleagues and the lack of support from the Embassy. Edmonds Diaries, 1 Oct. 1940.

[24] Newton to FO, 26 Nov. 1940, FO 371/24559.

[25] Newton to FO, 27 Nov. 1940, FO 371/24559.

presented to the British government. The declaration restated Iraq's support for the treaty, "expressing surprise at the instructions to the Ambassador who was credited with having faced the Iraq Govt with the ultimatum of changing the Prime Minister or forfeiting the friendship of H.M.G. and protesting against the interference with the internal affairs of Iraq."[27] The Foreign Office reassured Newton that they supported his language and would say so to the Iraqi Chargé d'Affaires.[28]

Rashid Ali also faced internal opposition. Given the tense relations between Newton and the Prime Minister, Nuri as-Said was used as an intermediary between them. At the same time, Nuri was secretly working against the government of which he was still a Cabinet member.[29] Seeing that Britain would only be satisfied with a new government, Nuri informed Newton that he would give his resignation to the Regent as a means of weakening the government and hastening its collapse.[30] Edmonds was employed in a similar capacity as intermediary on the British side.[31]

By January 1941 internal opposition had constrained Rashid Ali's power. The Regent threatened to abdicate unless the government resigned, and four Cabinet ministers

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[26] Edmonds Diaries, 1 Dec. 1940.

[27] Edmonds Diaries, 30 Nov. 1940.

[28] FO to Newton, 3 Dec. 1940, FO 371/24559.

[29] Nuri informed Edmonds that the Regent was going to force Rashid Ali's resignation, and given this news Edmonds cancelled plans to leave Baghdad "though I disliked being taken into N.[uri]'s confidence over such a matter." Edmonds Diaries, 6 Oct. 1940.

[30] Seymour at the Foreign Office observed that Nuri's role as intermediary was becoming "suspect": "On the one hand he announces that he will 'at once tender his resignation'; on the other he instructs the Charge d'affs. here to complain of Sir B. Newton's intervention. We have however no indication that he has been mixed up with Rashid Ali's pro Axis policy, and we must not quarrel with Nuri if we can possibly help it." Minute by Seymour, 30 Nov. 1940, FO 371/24559.

[31] Rashid Ali at one point asked Edmonds to speak to Newton about a note the Embassy had given Nuri protesting the opening of direct communication with Germany by telegraph and the recall of a newspaper that published an article against the German declaration of support for the Arabs. Edmonds Diaries, 26 Nov. 1940.

had submitted written resignations, which would have left the Government without the required number of ministers. Yet the next day, the Regent changed his mind, giving into pressure from the army officers and Rashid Ali himself.[32] When Edmonds suggested that the Prime Minister get a vote of confidence from Parliament, Rashid Ali replied with a threat: "if anybody wanted to propose a vote of no-confidence they could try but he would tell the whole story of British interference, the Regent's improper interference and so on and whip up popular indignation."[33]

Despite all of Britain's pressure tactics, Rashid Ali was still in power in January 1941. How did the Rashid Ali Government remained in power for so long, given such strong British opposition to it? It is a real measure of British weakness in Iraq during the early years of the war that this Prime Minister, to whom they objected so strongly, was still in power six months after the Ambassador declared his inability to work with him. The larger events of the war played a key role. As late as January 1941 British military officials decided that they did not have enough troops to spare to make a real stand in Iraq. The Chiefs of Staff Committee of the War Cabinet concluded that air raids could result in hostilities which would require reinforcements.[34] It was not yet worth the risk of upsetting the status quo. The Chiefs of Staff prioritized aiding Greece, and establishing a response to Axis advances in the Balkans, rather than focusing on the Middle East in January 1941.[35]

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[32] Edmonds Diaries, 13, 16, and 25 Jan. 1941 and Newton to FO, 27 Jan. 1941, FO 371/27061.

[33] Edmonds Diaries, 30 Jan. 1941.

[34] War Cabinet, Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Extract from Minutes of Meeting held on 31st January, 1941," FO 371/27061.

[35] Warner, 67-68. Warner effectively places the events of Iraq and Syria in 1941 within their larger war context.

Military options did not seem feasible, so the Chiefs of Staff pursued other avenues. They concluded: "Our strongest weapons at present were therefore financial and economic."[36] Britain continued putting economic pressure on the Iraqi Government by informing Rashid Ali that they would not provide dollars for purchases from the United States or any other form of economic cooperation as long as he remained in power.[37] Britain also provided funds to the Regent for bribing the tribes, hoping that this might threaten the power of the army. While Newton had been hesitant to resort to bribery the previous year, he now agreed that they should provide funds to the Regent to buy support and help offset the influence of Axis money.[38]

Another factor was the Iraqi military, which supported Rashid Ali's Government rather than the pro-British Regent. The "Golden Square," as the four main military leaders were called, consisted of four Colonels: Salah ud Din Sabbagh, Kamil Shabib, Fahmi Said, and Mahmud Salman.[39] As for their aims, the Embassy in Baghdad reported that "The guiding political principles of the 'Golden Square' (apart from self-interest which is of course with them a strong motive) are belief in a German victory and extreme

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[36] War Cabinet, Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Extract from Minutes of Meeting held on 31st January, 1941," FO 371/27061.

[37] Edmonds Diaries, 2 Jan. 1941.

[38] SO2, the branch of SOE Cairo responsible for sabotage, was involved in disbursing funds, and Newton, concerned about any attempt to impinge on Embassy territory, asked that "their activities should be co-ordinated with those of the Embassy." Seymour gave Newton his assurance that SO2 had been instructed to get Newton's approval on any operational plans for Iraq before they started. Newton to FO, 7 Feb. 1941 and Seymour to Newton, 11 Feb. 1941, FO 371/27062. For SO2 and SO1 (the propaganda branch) see A.D. to Jebb, 31 Dec. 1940, FO898/113.

[39] Reeva Simon describes the Four Colonels as the "transitional generation." They attended Ottoman military schools like Nuri and the other Iraqi leaders, but "they came to Istanbul late, joined the Arab nationalist clubs just before the war, and fought on the Turkish side, eventually finding their ways to Syria and Faysal." This subtle generational difference proved crucial to their views: "They had not gone through the ideological conflict of Ottomanism versus Arabism. On the contrary, they were pan-Arabs…to them, working with the British was treason, not pragmatism." Simon, 131.

pan-Arab nationalist. They are in close and constant touch with the Mufti who has turned their heads with flattery."[40] The fact that many of the most powerful forces in Iraq, such as the army, the Mufti, and many of Iraq's politicians were strongly pro-German made it unlikely that the relatively weak but pro-British Regent and a British Embassy that lacked military backing could unseat a Prime Minister who was sympathetic to the Axis.

Edmonds also attributed the longevity of Rashid Ali's government to "the characters of the principal persons concerned," reflecting British officials' preoccupation with the role of personalities in Iraqi politics. In describing the Prime Minister's will to stay in power, Edmonds uses tribal and animal imagery:

> In times of stress there comes into his eyes a look that is familiar to those of us who have had to deal with untutored tribesmen who have never seen a town or had contact with civilised humanity, a look of combined fear, cunning and savagery…. From the end of November onwards the Prime Minister was like a tiger at bay, with fangs bared and claws unsheathed, determined to do anything rather than resign.[41]

Edmonds' conclusion was that "The danger of the situation was thus due almost entirely to the reckless character of the Prime Minister and his determination to stay in office whatever the cost."

Rashid Ali finally relented when two of his new Ministers threatened to resign themselves and after he received news that the army at Diwaniya and Shia tribes would support the Regent.[42] Despite his efforts to retain power, Rashid Ali was undermined by

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[40] Baghdad Chancery to Eastern Department, 11 Feb. 1941, FO 371/27062.

[41] Edmonds to Newton, 15 Feb. 1941, enclosure in Newton to Eden, 27 Feb. 1941, FO 371/27063.

[42] Rashid Ali challenged the Regent by submitting to him an Iradah to sign dissolving the Iraqi Parliament. The Regent left Baghdad to avoid having to sign the Iradah and went to Diwaniyah in southern Iraq to renew his ties with the tribes there and win their support. This pattern of the Regent leaving Baghdad when trouble threatened would be repeated later during the April coup. Newton to FO, 30 Jan.

both internal and external pressures.[43] The Cabinet resigned on January 31, and Rashid Ali was replaced by Taha al-Hashimi, which was a disappointment to the Embassy given his pro-Axis connections.[44] Edmonds described Taha al-Hashimi as "the most important personage in the Iraqi political scene" for the previous two years. In another example of patron-client relations in Iraqi politics, Taha al-Hashimi maintained his influence through what Edmonds called "an ingenious system of collective security" that allowed him to maintain control of the Iraqi military: "he appointed to the principal combatant commands in the capital four officers of extreme nationalistic and anti-British complexion; while he kept them in their commands, they intervened to prevent any change of Cabinet which might result in the removal of Taha from the Ministry of Defence." This "collective security" arrangement was not fail-safe though, as Rashid Ali called the Iraqi army to "stand-to" behind Taha's back, and the four army officers supported Rashid Ali after Taha resigned from the Cabinet and also made contact with the Mufti apart from Taha.[45] This change in allegiance would have important consequences throughout Taha's short-lived government, when he would find himself

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1941, FO 371/27061 and Air Officer Commanding to HQ RAF ME, 31 Jan. 1941, FO 371/27061.

[43] Warner attributes the government's fall to British success in North Africa and the impact of its economic sanctions, as well as the growing threat of civil war in Iraq. Warner, 79.

[44] One of the ex-Sharifian officers and a General in the Iraqi army, Taha al-Hashimi served as Minister of Defence in Nuri's 1938 government, and before that was Chief of the General Staff from 1929 until the Bekir Sidqi coup in 1936. Edmonds submitted to the Embassy a detailed report on Taha's career in which he noted that Taha had been responsible as Chief of the General Staff for helping "to obtain for the army a dominating voice in the internal administration of the country, until to-day no branch of the Administration is free for [sic] military interference." He also credited Taha with beginning the cycle of military coups in Iraq back in 1935. As President of the Palestine Defence Society, which received German support, he became a close colleague of Dr. Amin Ruwaiha, a German agent In Iraq. Taha was behind the Iraqi government's attempts to blackmail Britain into making concessions in Palestine. Edmonds to Newton, 15 Feb. 1941, enclosure in Newton to Eden, 27 Feb. 1941, FO 371/27063.

[45] Ibid.

often at odds with the four army officers and the Mufti.[46]

In his first meeting with Newton Taha assured him that Iraq would cooperate with Britain. Yet in a public statement before the Chamber, Taha stated that the new Government's foreign policy would be the same as that of Rashid Ali's government, and that while Iraq would fulfill treaty obligations, it "should avoid the calamities of war so that she could develop under peaceful conditions."[47] The Foreign Office was not pleased by this statement. The British hoped that Taha would improve Anglo-Iraqi relations, limit the political power of the military, and neutralize anti-British elements in the army.[48] Yet they doubted that he would be able or willing to meet these demands. After all the effort expended to get rid of Rashid Ali, the British found themselves with an Iraqi Prime Minister who was both ineffective and unwilling to cooperate fully. They had rid themselves of their "Public Enemy Number 1" in Iraq, but had not resolved the underlying causes of Iraq's lack of support for Britain, namely Palestine and the pervasive presence of pro-Axis forces in the Iraqi military and educational system.[49]

While the Embassy found Taha to be less effective and cooperative than they had hoped, they appreciated the support of Taufiq Suwaidi, the Iraqi Foreign Minister. The

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46 Warner observes that while the British believed that Taha "was as much of a pan-Arabist as Rashid 'Ali" and possibly working with him, "This was perhaps a little hard on General Taha, who was weak rather than wicked." Warner, 79.

47 Newton to FO, 6 Feb. 1941, FO 371/27061.

48 The long list of specific requirements that Newton presented to the new Prime Minister illustrates the nature of Britain's specific grievances with Iraq: the breaking off of relations with Italy; government guidance for public opinion with respect to Anglo-Iraqi relations; "Elimination from politics of hostile military elements," the return of Palestinian political refugees and their removal from any official positions, particularly in education; control of the Mufti; cooperation on economic issues; and co-ordination of propaganda between Britain and Iraq through collaboration by the Iraqi press department and the Embassy. Newton to Eden, 17 Feb. 1941, FO 371/27062.

49 For the increasingly anti-British sentiment in the Iraqi military and educational system in the 1930s and early war years, see Simon.

Iraqi Government took advantage of this and engaged him as an intermediary, on one occasion sending Taufiq to speak with the Oriental Counsellor, Holt, to explain the Government's position before a scheduled meeting between the Ambassador and Prime Minister. The Government also sent Taufiq Suwaidi to meet with Eden in Cairo in March. Yet the Embassy did not expect him to be able to influence Taha to be more cooperative. In fact Newton reported that the most they could hope for with Taufiq was "to make him feel so uncomfortable that he will expedite his resigntation [sic]," thereby undermining the stability of the government.[50]

The Iraqi Government continued to feel the pressure of Britain's economic measures against Iraq. Taha asked Britain to reconsider its policy of refusing to provide dollars to Iraq. British officials refused to make these concessions until they saw concrete evidence of progress.[51] Newton was instructed to tell the Iraqi government that they might reexamine the issue of dollars once this "first and most important desideratum" was met.[52]

Britain's response to developments in Iraq was further complicated by the impending arrival on April 2 of Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, the new British Ambassador.[53] Churchill issued instructions to the new Ambassador before his departure, particularly dealing with Iraqi foreign relations. Acknowledging Iraq's interest in three particular

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[50] Newton to FO, 19 Feb. 1941, FO 371/27061.

[51] The request was presented to Britain through the Iraqi Chargé in London in a meeting with Sir Alexander Cadogan, the Permanent Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office. Cadogan recorded in his diary that in response to the Chargé's request, he told him that "we welcomed the new Govt. and were waiting to see what they wd. do. First thing we wanted them to do was to kick out Italians. When they'd done that, we might consider doing things to help them." David Dilks, ed. *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1972), 355 (17 Feb. 1941).

[52] FO to Newton, 1 Jan. 1941, FO 624/22.

issues: Palestine, Syria, and Arab Federation, he restated Britain's position. Britain's policy in Palestine was that of the 1939 White Paper. As for Syria, Britain had stated after the fall of France in 1940 that "they could not allow Syria or the Lebanon to be occupied by any hostile Power…" With respect to Arab Federation, the official British stance was that Britain viewed the idea with sympathy but would not be responsible for taking the initiative, which would have to come from the Arab states themselves. Churchill acknowledged that what Cornwallis was authorized to say would do little to encourage the Iraqis: "it will not be feasible for you to endeavour to win over Arab opinion by holding out attractive promises on these three matters." But he hoped that Cornwallis would at least be able to bring Axis promises into question for the Iraqis and convince them that Britain was the only country willing to preserve Iraqi independence and, repeating a common refrain of British officials in Iraq, "that the true interests of Iraq obviously require a British victory."[54]

Given his own doubts as to Taha's ability to rein in the military, the Regent offered a plan to put in place a more pro-British Prime Minister. He proposed pressing Taha to clamp down on the military, which he would be unable to do and then he would be forced to resign. The Regent would then take the royal family to Basra to be out of the way in case of military pressure or an attempted coup. Newton supported the Regent's plan for a change of government, but the Foreign Office disagreed, fearing the potential reaction of the military, Rashid Ali, or the Mufti, which might force the British military

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[53] For details on Cornwallis's career, see Chapter 1.

[54] Churchill to Cornwallis, 11 March 1941, FO 371/27061.

to get involved.[55] Even as late as the end of March 1941, only a couple of weeks before the Rashid Ali coup, British officials in London were still determined to maintain the status quo and avoid a situation that might lead to British military involvement.

Newton, however, strongly disagreed with the Foreign Office on this issue and called for a firm response: "As always, it is really a choice of risks which is involved and if we now blow hot and cold and hesitate to pursue to an effective conclusion the policy steadily followed now for some months, our influence will suffer and our enemies will be correspondingly encouraged." Their strong stance was weakening pro-Axis elements, and while there were risks in following the Regent's plan, "the worst that might happen would seem to be temporary control of Baghdad by the military clique who would find it difficult to maintain their illegal control. No such mutiny is in fact anticipated."[56] General Archibald Wavell, the Commander in Chief Middle East, agreed with Newton and suggested that they support the Regent's plan as a means of getting Iraq to break off relations with Italy. He felt that conditions favored Britain and that there would not be a serious local reaction.[57] The War Office Chiefs of Staff committee recommended that they wait until Cornwallis's arrival in Iraq and give him a few days to assess the situation before reaching a decision: "the occasion was opportune for a forward policy in Iraq, but…the timing of any action and the methods to be employed must be left to the people

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[55] The Regent's suggestion for Prime Minister was Jamil Madfai, who had served as Prime Minister after the 1936 coup. Newton to FO, 21 March 1941, FO 371/27062.

[56] Newton to FO, 26 March 1941, FO 371/27062. This last comment is significant, coming as it did just days before the coup took place.

[57] Wavell to War Office Chiefs of Staff, 30 March 1941, FO 371/27062.

on the spot."[58]

The Regent's plan was never put in action due to the intervening military coup.[59] On the evening of April 1 Iraqi soldiers had occupied various government buildings, but by the next morning they had all been withdrawn and Taha remained in office. The Regent, warned that he might be seized, took refuge at the American Legation and then went to Habbaniya in the American Minister's car and planned to fly to Basra. The military clique tried to get Taha to replace the Regent, but he refused and resigned his post as Prime Minister. The "Golden Square" went to see the Regent, planning to press him to appoint Rashid Ali as Prime Minister, but he had already left Baghdad and could not be located. The Regent's departure thwarted the four officers' plans because they needed the Regent's approval for the change in government to be constitutional. Rashid Ali took office on April 3 as head of a new Government of National Defence.[60]

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[58]The Foreign Office still had serious doubts about the plan. Crosthwaite pointed out that at least the present government was not openly pro-Axis. The military authorities had previously been against intervention as they wanted to avoid increased commitments in the Middle East, and yet now they said that the reaction would not be serious and they would accept the risk. Butler questioned the wisdom of asking Cornwallis to call for armed intervention his first day as Ambassador because this would undermine his strong personal relationships with Iraqi leaders. Minutes by Crosthwaite and Butler, 1 April 1941, FO 371/27062.

[59] For a detailed account of the 1941 Rashid Ali coup, see Geoffrey Warner, *Iraq and Syria 1941*; Walid Muhammad Sa'id A'zami, *Intifadat Rashid 'Ali al-Kilani wa-al-harb al-'Iraqiyah al-Baritaniyah, 1941* [The Rashid Ali al-Kilani Uprising and the Iraqi-British War, 1941] (Baghdad, 1987); and Mahmud al-Durra, *Al Harb al-Iraqiya al-Britaniya* [The Iraqi-British War]. The official Iraqi interpretation of the 1941 Rashid Ali coup can be found in the report of the Government of Iraq's investigating committee into the events of 1941, reprinted in 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, *Tarikh al-wizarat al-'Iraqiyah* [History of the Governments of Iraq], vol. 5 (Sayda: Matba'at al-'Irfan, 1965), 272-282. For the official British assessment see George Kirk, *The Middle East in the War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952): 56-78, part of the *Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946* produced by the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House).

[60] The immediate pretext for the coup was Taha's decision in late March to transfer two members of the "Golden Square" to posts outside of Baghdad in an attempt to weaken the army's political influence. They refused to leave, causing a government crisis. Taha asked the Regent to meet with the four officers who would apologize for their earlier actions. The Regent refused at first, but finally on April 1 under pressure from various Iraqi politicians he agreed to meet with the officers and planned to leave Baghdad immediately afterward. The April 1 coup and the fleeing of the Regent to Basra prevented the meeting.

The coup happened at a sensitive time for the British Embassy, as Cornwallis was not to officially present his credentials as the new British Ambassador to the Regent until April 5.[61] Given the facts of the coup, Cornwallis announced that "I propose *to have no* official relations with this new regime and will suggest similar attitude on the part of my colleagues."[62] This put the Embassy in the challenging position of not having an officially recognized Ambassador and being forced to deal with an unrecognized government during a serious crisis in Iraq. Edmonds took on an important role as the unofficial point of contact between the Iraqi Government and the Embassy, as he was technically a Government of Iraq employee although a British citizen.[63]

Cornwallis unofficially met with the Regent at Habbaniya, where the RAF base was located, soon after his arrival in Iraq. The new Ambassador believed they were past the point of compromise and he urged the Regent to proceed to Basra and form a new Cabinet, call the Chamber and Senate to join him, and round up public support. He hoped that they would act quickly, as "They seem to have been singularly negligent in making

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Nuri, fearing a military coup in early April, left Baghdad once again for Amman. For the events of the coup, see files in FO371/27062; Report by Edmonds, 1 April 1941 enclosed in Cornwallis to Eden, 6 April 1941, FO371/27067; and Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1941, 8 March 1942, FO 371/31371.

[61]The timing of the coup was not accidental: Edmonds reported that it had been predicted that a coup would be planned for this period before Cornwallis officially took over. Report by Edmonds, 1 April 1941 enclosed in Cornwallis to Eden, 6 April 1941, FO 371/27067. Cornwallis was finally able to present his credentials in June 1941.

[62] Cornwallis to FO, 3 April 1941, FO 371/27062. The American, Egyptian, Turkish, and Saudi representatives all recommended that their governments take the same line and not recognize the new Rashid Ali regime. Cornwallis to FO, 3 April 1941, FO 371/27062.

[63] Edmonds would have a crucial part to play in the events of the next two months in this capacity as intermediary, yet there are hints that he sometimes exceeded his directions. At one point in April he noted in his diary that "Cornwallis…was still inclined to grumble that I had taken uncoordinated action on my own." The Ambassador obviously preferred an intermediary who would simply relay information rather than getting involved in policy decisions himself and perhaps saying something that went against the official British line. Edmonds Diaries, 9 April 1941.

plans to meet a situation which has been staring them in the faces for weeks."[64] Cornwallis sent a Counsellor from the Embassy to Basra to advise the Regent and transmit information about his plans back to the Embassy. He also sent money for the Regent to use to gather support, and arranged for his proclamations to be disseminated nationally.

Both the new Ambassador and the Regent were frustrated in their attempts to rally support during April. Cornwallis's extensive personal connections in Iraq, developed over years as a government adviser in Iraq, were one of the reasons he was brought in as Ambassador, but he was frustrated in his attempts to exert this influence: "I am doing everything I can to make my attitude known but I am handicapped by difficulty of getting into touch with old friends." His efforts were further hampered by rumors spread by Rashid Ali that he had visited Cornwallis and been informed that the British were "not interested in what is an internal question." Cornwallis suggested they use the Arabic BBC broadcast to counter these rumors.[65] He was also deeply concerned by reports from the Embassy Counsellor in Basra as to the Regent's inability to rally support, particularly within the army. In fact the army tried to capture the Regent, so he boarded a British ship with his supporters.[66]

Cornwallis suggested that in the circumstances, Britain should institute a more forward policy in Iraq: "Nothing short of armed intervention on our part can hurt Rashid

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64 Cornwallis to FO, 3 April 1941, FO 371/27062.

65 Cornwallis to FO, 4 April 1941, FO 371/27062.

66 Cornwallis to FO, 4 April 1941, FO 371/27062 and Cornwallis to FO, 7 April 1941, FO 371/27063.

Ali at present…"[67] Both the Head of the Military Mission and Edmonds believed that the "majority of the population, although it does not dare come into the open, is friendly to Great Britain and that action, if taken soon, would only have to be directed against dissident portion of the Iraqi army." [68] British military intelligence reported that the southern Shias were "hopping mad" and waiting for a British show of support for the Regent: "Reports from every source now indicate that immediate British show of force would probably turn scales in Favour of Regent and that hold of military leaders in all commands outside Baghdad is slight."[69] However, if they waited any longer they would have to deal with a possible influx of German agents into Iraq as well.[70]

Edmonds was highly critical of Cornwallis's pessimistic view of events in Iraq and felt that he was taking too narrow a view of things: Cornwallis "is coming round but his mind is moving too slowly for events…we are moving in a vicious circle and he is making no step to get out of it." He urged the Ambassador to meet with Rashid Ali personally rather than through intermediaries. He blamed Cornwallis's narrow perspective on his reliance on intelligence reports: "The trouble is that he lives in an atmosphere of 'intelligence reports' recording all the wicked things the army have done or are doing without working out their precise significance."[71] From Edmonds' perspective working within the Government of Iraq, the Embassy was taking reports at face value without considering the wider context, or the perspective of the Iraqi

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67 Cornwallis to FO, 9 April 1941, FO 371/27063.

68 Cornwallis to FO, 5 April 1941, FO 371/27062.

69 Wing Commander Jope-Slade (RAF Air Liaison Officer) to Cawthorn, 7 April 1941, FO 371/27064.

70 Cornwallis to FO, 5 April 1941, FO 371/27062.

71 Edmonds Diaries, 10 April 1941.

government.[72]

On April 7 Rashid Ali presented a series of proposals to Edmonds, who then passed them on to Cornwallis.[73] The Prime Minister viewed these proposals as an ultimatum, informing Edmonds on April 9 that if he did not have a reply by 3 pm he would replace the Regent the next day. Rashid Ali went ahead with his threat and took action to create a constitutionally recognized government. On April 10 the two Houses of the Iraqi Parliament passed a resolution deposing the Regent and replacing him with Sharif Sharaf, another member of the royal family.[74] The new Regent then proceeded to the Palace and formally accepted Taha's resignation and asked Rashid Ali to form a new government. Rashid Ali made a speech in Parliament stating that the change in government was "purely an internal matter, and that they would respect and carry out the

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[72] Given the doubts that intelligence officials had about their own reports, Edmonds' criticism was valid. Wing Commander Jope-Slade of AHQ Iraq sent regular reports to the Military Intelligence Centre, Egypt (MICE) about the situation in Iraq, but most of them contained a caveat that they were based on limited information, showing that the source of intelligence was well aware himself of its limitations. In mid-April Jope-Slade warned that the "appeasement policy" of the Embassy would further limit his pro-British intelligence sources and "Position of all A.L.O.'s [Allied Liaison Officers] will be most difficult in future even if Rashid Does not press removal." Jope-Slade to Cawthorn, 11 April 1941, FO 371/27064. By April 24 he reported that the situation seemed to be returning to normal, with the arrival of British troops adding to a sense of internal security. Yet he was concerned that by trying to seek an agreement with Britain, Rashid Ali was undermining his position and losing support to the point that he might be replaced with a "full military dictatorship" even more open to Axis interference. He also noted that his assessment was based on "somewhat slender information." Jope-Slade to Cawthorn, 24 April 1941, FO 371/27066. A few days later he reported that his intelligence network was further undermined by the arrest of two of his interpreters in Basra, and he was looking into "exploiting Kurdish nationalist sentiment" if the Iraqi army moved against British troops. Yet he conceded that even this information was "mostly gossip on situation still obscure." Jope-Slade to Cawthorn, 27 April 1941, FO 371/27067. While these reports reveal some of the avenues military authorities on the spot were pursuing to deal with the situation, they also show the stark reality of the weakness of Britain's military intelligence system in Iraq, on which the Embassy was reliant for information.

[73] The Iraqi Prime Minister proposed that the Regent should allow him to form a new cabinet, and then leave the country for four months with Sharif Sharaf as acting Regent. In return Rashid Ali would agree to support the treaty and cooperate with Britain, give British advisers more power over propaganda and the Palestinian political refugees, and prepare public opinion for breaking off relations with Italy. FO 371/27063. Edmonds recorded that Cornwallis and Holman, the Acting Counsellor, gave these proposals "a most hostile reception" and argued that it would be less offensive to Britain if they just stood by and did nothing than to agree to Rashid Ali's plan. Edmonds Diaries, 7 April 1941.

Treaty."[75]

Cornwallis reported to the Foreign Office that Rashid Ali, by taking these steps, "has gained complete ascendancy and driven all opposition to ground for the present."[76] Rashid Ali's action in Parliament undermined the possible effectiveness of a British show of force in Iraq. The Prime Minister's public statement of support for the treaty would now make it difficult for Britain to take any military action against Iraq unless it could be shown that Iraq had violated the treaty in some respect. He suggested that they put the Prime Minister to the test, informing him that they planned to move troops through Iraq to Palestine and open the lines of communication, a right they were guaranteed under the Treaty: "This will be an acid test for him. If he refused we have a perfect right to take any action we think fit and be in good position to counter his invasion propaganda. If he agrees we will gain military foothold in the country and be in much better position to recover the vast amount of ground which we have lost."[77]

Officials in London took Cornwallis's warning to heart, and on April 11 the Foreign Office informed the Ambassador that troops would be sent to Basra. This was not completely in keeping with the Treaty, because while Britain had the right to open the lines of communication, she was also obliged to consult the Government of Iraq beforehand. However, given the emergency situation and the fact that Britain did not recognize the current Iraqi Government, they agreed it was best to overlook these niceties

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74 Edmonds Diaries 9 April 1941 and Cornwallis to FO, 10 April 1941, FO 371/27063.

75 Cornwallis to FO, 11 April 1941, FO 371/27064/E1411.

76 Cornwallis to FO, 11 April 1941, FO371/27064/E1408.

77 Cornwallis to FO, 11 April 1941, FO371/27064/E1414 and Cornwallis to FO, 11 April 1941, FO371/27064/E1410.

and go ahead with sending the troops.[78] The Government of India Defence Department reported that the troops were due to leave Karachi on April 13 for Basra.[79]

Cornwallis decided that he might have to go back on his decision not to have any contact with Rashid Ali in order to make the troop landing in Basra successful. Yet he was concerned that this personal contact might be misinterpreted and asked for permission from London first. He also suggested that they might offer a concession of recognition of the government in return for allowing the troops to land: "I realise loss of prestige involved, though I hope it might be largely off-set by the peaceful landing of British troops…"[80] Informal recognition of the Government would buy time to allow the Ambassador to rally pro-British Iraqis from among his contacts. Given the growing strength of fifth-column activity in Iraq and German influence, even sympathetic Iraqis were paying "lip service to Rashid Ali" and were unwilling to see him. Pro-British Iraqis were:

> completely disorganized and they have been too frightened to come and see me. This complex must be removed…I must have a quiet period during which I can get in social touch with old friends and during which inevitable opposition to Rashid Ali will have a chance to grow…For that reason I attach particular importance to immediate entry into informal relations with the Government.[81]

Cornwallis had been specifically brought in for his extensive contacts and considered these personal contacts to be so important that they justified recognizing a hostile government in order to give them time to work.

The Foreign Office told Cornwallis that "It is left to you to decide whether to

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78 FO to Baghdad, 11 April 1941, FO 371/27064.

79 Government of India, Defence Dept. to Secretary of State for India, 12 April 1941, FO 371/27064.

80 Cornwallis to FO, 11 and 12 April 1941, FO 371/27065.

make this communication direct or through advisers."[82] The Ambassador was also instructed to tell Rashid Ali about the troops when it was appropriate, making it clear that if he cooperated with the troop landings Britain was prepared to open "informal relations" and recognize the new government.[83] Cornwallis had the first of two secret, unofficial meetings with Rashid Ali on the evening of April 15. They met in Edmonds' home in order to avoid public comment, as the adviser was publicly known to be in contact with Rashid Ali. Cornwallis reported that the Prime Minister was friendly during the meeting, assured him that "the greatest desire in life" was to act in accordance with the Treaty. Cornwallis noted that on his end he kept a "friendly attitude," was non-committal on the issue of recognition of the government, and avoided mention of the arrival of British troops, which Rashid Ali still did not know about.[84] Cornwallis met again with the Prime Minister after the troops landed. He refused to give in to Rashid Ali's requests for recognition and the swift movement of troops through Iraq until he saw a good faith effort on Iraq's part, pointing out the problem of the Italian Minister's continued presence: "At present we are sparring and while expressing a desire for friendship I am giving nothing away."[85]

After the first secret meeting Cornwallis notified Rashid Ali of the impending arrival of British troops to Basra because rumors were spreading and he wanted to avoid open confrontation with the Prime Minister. The Government of Iraq consented to the

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[81] Cornwallis to FO, 21 April 1941, FO 371/27066.

[82] FO to Baghdad, 13 April 1941, FO 371/27064.

[83] FO to Baghdad, 14 April 1941, FO 371/27064.

[84] Despite the cordiality of the meeting, Cornwallis concluded "I do not trust him an inch." Cornwallis to FO, 15 April 1941, FO 371/27065.

[85] Cornwallis to FO, 21 April 1941, FO 371/27066.

landings but then soon qualified this response with three requests: that the troops immediately move on to Palestine after landing, that no further troops arrive until the first group had left Iraq, and that the British give more notice before the arrival of future troops. These requests would have limited the number of British troops allowed in Iraq at one time to only those actually moving through the lines of communication.[86] The first set of troops arrived without incident in Basra on April 19, but two days later the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a note to Cornwallis restating the previous three conditions and adding a new one that the "total strength of forces within the frontier of Iraq at any one time not to exceed 1 mixed brigade."[87] While the British had planned to use the treaty provisions as a pretext for assembling troops in Basra indefinitely to be prepared for any future situation, the Iraqis called the British bluff.

Britain refused to accept these conditions. The Foreign Office informed the Embassy that:

> Our chief interest in sending troops to Iraq is the covering and establishment of a great assembly base at Basra…Our rights under the Treaty were invoked to cover disembarkation of troops and to avoid bloodshed, but force would have been used to the utmost limit to secure the disembarkation if necessary….No undertakings can be given that troops will be sent northwards or moved through to Palestine, and the right to require such undertakings should not be recognised in respect of a Government which has in itself usurped power by a coup d'etat, or in a country where our Treaty rights have so long been frustrated in the spirit.[88]

Not only were the British troops in Basra to stay, against the wishes of the Iraqi Government, but a second brigade was set to leave India in mid-May, with a third to

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[86] Cornwallis to FO, 18 April 1941, FO 371/27065.

[87] Cornwallis to FO, 21 April 1941, FO 371/27066.

[88] FO to Baghdad, 22 April 1941, FO 371/27066/E1623.

follow in June.[89]

Cornwallis had earlier called for the use of force, but by the end of April he had changed his mind and suggested delaying tactics. The Rashid Ali government could be replaced by an even less cooperative one. Cornwallis doubted that they would see a real change in the Government's attitude, as German progress in Cyrenaica and Greece only increased German prestige in Iraq: "In these circumstances even a friendly Government would probably have to play for safety and this Government is obviously deeply committed to Germany. Since the only immediate alternative to it is a military junta, it would be unwise to force the pace before we are stronger militarily and until Iraqi opposition to the present regime has had time to organise itself."[90] Cornwallis met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and told him that, given the government's cooperation on landing troops in Basra, he "had been authorised to enter into informal relations with the new administration forthwith."[91] Yet this concession was not enough. The Iraqi Government would not agree to allow any more troops from India to land in Basra. Cornwallis responded that "ships will proceed and His Majesty's Government will hold…Government responsible for any incident that may occur as consequence of this refusal."[92]

Despite the best efforts of the Embassy to arrive at a diplomatic solution to the crisis, it escalated to a military conflict when, on April 30, an Iraqi Army unit informed Royal Air Force Headquarters in Iraq that they were occupying the hills around

89 Ibid.
90 Cornwallis to FO, 25 April 1941, FO 371/27067.
91 Cornwallis to Eden, 6 June 1941, FO 371/27077.
92 Cornwallis to FO, 28 April 1941, FO 371/27067.

Habbaniya, the main British air base in Iraq, "for the purpose of training." The Iraqi authorities asked the RAF to stop all flights and movements in and out of the base. They warned that if the RAF did not comply they would not be responsible for the shelling of any British airplanes leaving the base. British military officials refused to comply and warned that any armed response by the Iraqi army would violate the Treaty and "will be considered an act of war and will be met by immediate counter action…"[93] Cornwallis supported this decision and saw it as an opportunity to legitimately challenge the Iraqi government. Instead of trying to persuade the Iraqis to withdraw Britain should take immediate action: "The Iraqi Government by this provocative action has given us a fine chance of acting forcibly with full justification, and I hope that we shall not let it slip."[94] Churchill agreed, sending a telegram to the Chief Airman in Iraq saying that if they had to act, "hit them quick and hit them hard."[95] It now appeared that the time had come to challenge the status quo and intervene directly in Iraq, and British planes subsequently bombed the Iraqi army unit.

Given the increasingly tense situation, Cornwallis had called for all British women and children to be evacuated from Iraq. The rest of the British community was offered refuge in the British and American Embassies.[96] Cornwallis and most of Britain's

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93 RAF HQ Iraq to Cornwallis, 30 April 1941, FO 371/27067.

94 Cornwallis to FO, 30 April 1941, FO 371/27067.

95 Killearn Diaries, 2 May 1941.

96 The women and children were gathered at Habbaniya, but the subsequent arrival of Iraqi troops around the base on April 30, and the Iraqi warning that any departing planes would be shot down, forced them to stay on the base in the midst of the fighting until they could be safely evacuated to Basra on May 7. Throughout the month of May, a total of 170 British subjects were housed in the American Legation and 350 in the British Embassy. After May 1 the Embassy's telegraphic communication was cut off except to the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and they were unable to send any more cipher telegrams. On May 2 they lost wireless communication as well. Iraqi police surrounded the Embassy and nobody was allowed to leave or enter. The Iraqis also demanded that the British flag be removed from the roof of the Embassy, that

experts on Iraq were effectively held under siege, sealed within the British Embassy. They were unable to communicate with London for the duration of the conflict, and the question arose of how to manage political issues in Iraq. Military and civilian authorities had to look elsewhere for support. The High Commissioner in Palestine, Harold MacMichael, was asked to serve as the point of communication between the British and the Regent, who had been evacuated to Jerusalem, and the Government of India searched its ranks for employees with experience in Iraq.[97] Many of these officials had served in Iraq during World War I or the 1920s, and therefore the 1941 coup marked the return to influence of the cadre of British officials who had gained experience in Iraq under the Mandate.[98] These men would continue to play an important role in Britain's network of political advisers in Iraq after the crisis.

MacMichael urged the Regent to form an alternative government in Jerusalem. This was an urgent priority for the Foreign Office: the Regent "should be pressed to take immediate action on these lines and to ignore constitutional niceties. So far as we are

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British bank managers turn over their keys, and that all Iraqis in the compound be sent out. Cornwallis cooperated on all but the last point. He also had all the secret Embassy archives and ciphers destroyed to prevent them from falling into Iraqi hands. After the crisis he justified his compliance by pointing out that the people in the Embassy, including women and children, were completely reliant on Iraqi authorities for food, water, medical supplies, and electricity: "I was obliged, therefore, to be more circumspect in my dealings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs than I should have been had I been responsible only for the safety and welfare of a small official staff." Cornwallis to Eden, 6 June 1941, FO 371/27077. Freya Stark gives an account of the British community's experiences during this siege in Freya Stark, *Dust in the Lion's Paw*: *Autobiography 1939-1946*, chapter 7 and in a series of articles that appeared in the *Times*, 27, 28 and 30 June 1941, included in FO371/27079. Cornwallis's account can be found in Cornwallis to Eden, 6 June 1941, FO371/27077. F.J. Harris, Senior Manager of the Ottoman Bank in Iraq, provided a colorful account of the life of the internees at the American Legation in Fisher to Bowker, 7 August 1941, FO371/27079.

97 MacMichael to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 May 1941, FO 371/27071. While MacMichael felt that this arrangement provided for adequate contact with the Regent, on May 19 he was informed that Gerald de Gaury was to be appointed Chargé d'Affaires with the Regent, with permission to communicate directly with the Foreign Office rather than going through the High Commissioner. Secretary of State for the Colonies to MacMichael, 19 May 1941, FO 371/27071.

98 Government of India, Defence Dept. to Secretary of State for India, 5 May 1941, FO 371/27068.

concerned he can make what promises he likes about internal affairs. We agree regarding desirability of some electoral reform to ensure fairer representation of all elements in Iraq."[99] But Britain wanted to avoid the appearance of British interference in the formation of this new government. Three former Ministers were with him in Jerusalem: Nuri as-Said, Ali Jaudat, and Jamil Madfai. The latter was considered to be the most suitable choice for Prime Minister, as Nuri "is regarded by Arabs in general as in our pockets."[100] Nuri's pro-British stance could be useful to Britain, but in this case it was a liability as Britain was determined to avoid the appearance of Britain taking over Iraq. When the Arab Legion sent troops to Iraq, Madfai proposed accompanying them to Baghdad in order to demonstrate to the Iraqis that the British planned to return the country to their control. The Secretary of State for the Colonies agreed, noting that they should publicize the fact "that friendly Iraqis of high political importance are accompanying British forces."[101]

The military campaign did not go as expected for Britain during the early days of May. Looking back on these events after the fact Cornwallis noted that his military advisers had predicted that the Iraqi army would fall apart when the British began bombing and yet they had held together against all expectations. The Iraqi army's

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[99] Secretary of State for the Colonies to MacMichael, 19 May 1941, FO 371/27071. MacMichael was authorized to give the Regent an advance of funds to support the formation of a new government, and de Gaury was instructed to "not hesitate to ask for any further sums you think necessary." Once the alternative government was established the Regent would be given access to Iraq Government money held in London. Secretary of State for the Colonies to MacMichael, 16 May 1941 and FO to Iraq for de Gaury, 30 May 1941, FO 371/27070.

[100] Minute by Seymour, 13 May 1941, FO 371/27069. In fact, MacMichael reported that the Regent would prefer to have Nuri out of Jerusalem and did not want him to be among the early returnees to Iraq. MacMichael hoped that the Secretary of State for Colonies would allow Nuri to visit Cairo "where Clayton has promised to keep him occupied." MacMichael to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 May 1941, FO 371/27069.

unexpected early success and its expectations of help arriving from the Axis powers, as well as the serious setbacks in the Western Desert, Syria, and the larger war effort, set the tone for debates between British civilian and military officials as to the best response to the situation in Iraq. The details of the military response are outside the scope of this study, but it is useful to examine the views of Wavell, the C in C Middle East and his debates with diplomats, particularly Lampson, the British Ambassador to Egypt, and politicians back at home, on an appropriate response. These often contentious debates reveal the divisions between political and military assessments of the situation in Iraq.[102]

While the troops that landed in Basra came from India, ultimate control of policy in Iraq fell to Wavell, the Commander in Chief, Middle East, who was based in Cairo and engaged in the war in the Western Desert at the time. Wavell was not optimistic about British chances in Iraq given British troop commitments elsewhere and he recommended negotiations with the Iraqis rather than greater military involvement.[103] As Wavell

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[101] Secretary of State for the Colonies to MacMichael, 10 May 1941, FO 371/27069.

[102] Warner, *Iraq and Syria 1941,* provides a useful overview of the coup from the military perspective, set against the larger context of the war. For the military and strategic aspect of the conflict, see George Kirk, *The Middle East in the War*, 56-78. For the Arab Legion's participation in the British military occupation, see John Bagot Glubb, *Britain and the Arabs: A Study of Fifty Years, 1908 to 1958* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1959), Chapter 17 and Glubb Pasha, "A Report on the Role Played by the Arab Legion in connection with the Recent Operations in Iraq," 10 June 1941, FO624/26.

[103] Wavell viewed the situation in Iraq from the perspective of the war in North Africa. Two-thirds of Britain's bombers had been diverted from the Western Desert to Iraq, which greatly limited Britain's ability to effectively bomb Tripoli and Benghazi, while the Expeditionary Force he was organizing to send from Palestine to Iraq would mean that there would be no means of transporting the Free French force to Syria, where the situation was also growing tense. Wavell reminded the War Office on May 3 that he had warned them that it would be difficult to send troops from Palestine for Iraq and that he had advised avoiding any commitment in Iraq, as the forces were already overstretched: "I do not see how I can possibly accept responsibility for force at Basrah of whose dispositions and strength I am unaware, and consider this must be controlled from India." Wavell to War Office, 3 May 1941, FO 371/27069. Ambassador Lampson was deeply concerned about the situation in the Western Desert in April 1941, both the evacuation of Benghazi and the capture of two Allied Generals, and the effect this would have on Egyptian public opinion, and it is against this backdrop that news of the confrontation at Habbaniya was received. Killearn Diaries, 4, 5, and 8 May, 1941.

explained to Lampson, the British Ambassador in Egypt: "It was a question of Egypt or Iraq. Which was the more important?"[104] Lampson was "horrified" when Wavell made this suggestion, but for both the General and the Ambassador, the obvious choice was Egypt at all costs.[105]

Wavell called for a political settlement rather than a military one, including resumption of normal relations with Iraq: "Firmness in dealing with enemy attack on Habbaniya will have on whole good effect but unless we can get back to normal relations with well-disposed Iraqi government at very early date suggestions that we propose to occupy country and suppress Iraqi independence will be exploited by enemy with serious results."[106] The War Office did not agree with Wavell's assessment and considered the commitment in Iraq to be "inevitable" given the need to secure Basra to protect Iranian and Iraqi oil. They also pointed out that the lines of communication to Turkey had taken on even greater value given "German air superiority in the Aegean Sea" as a result of the German occupation of Greece.[107]

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[104] Killearn Diaries, 5 May 1941.

[105] Lampson was so deeply distressed by Wavell's conclusions and the repercussions of negotiating with Iraq that he took the uncharacteristic step of acting without instruction from London. The Egyptian Prime Minister had proposed to telegraph the Egyptian Minister in Iraq and offer his "good offices" for negotiation between Iraq and Britain. Lampson agreed to this, and Prime Minister Sirry sent the telegram. Lampson records in his diary that the next day he "got rather cold feet" and telegraphed Eden asking for instructions as to whether they should accept this offer, to which the Foreign Office replied that he should inform Sirry that "I had done so on my own" without approval from London, where the offer was still being considered. Unfortunately the Egyptian telegram had already been sent and had to be suspended. Lampson admitted his mistake but felt sure that Wavell's suggestion would be accepted in London despite his own serious reservations: "Not like my usual caution, but I was anxious, in the light of Wavell's gloomy prognostications this morning of an impending tragedy at Habbaniya, to get on with the job." Killearn Diaries, 3 and 4 May 1941.

[106] Wavell to War Office, 5 Oct. 1941, FO 371/27069.

[107] War Office to C in C Middle East (Wavell), 4 May 1941, FO 371/27069. British authorities in India agreed with the War Office. The C in C India did not feel that a political solution and the establishment of an alternative government would be enough and "Any such Government must be backed by our armed occupation of key points." C in C India to War Office, 12 May 1941, FO 371/27069. The

As for future goals, the military authorities wanted to avoid any appearance to the civilian population and the tribes that they were compromising Iraqi independence. Political officers were only to be used for liaison work, not for administration: "As long as Iraq administration meets our military requirements it is not (repeat not) to be interfered with or superceded because it is inefficient in other directions." Britain also began a propaganda campaign, on the following lines:

> (a)We are fighting not the Iraqi people but Rashid Ali and Golden Square. (b) Hostilities will cease as soon as Iraq gets rid of her Axis paid misleaders. (c) We have no territorial or political ambitions in Iraq. All we want is a Government in power which will honour the Anglo Iraq Treaty in letter and in spirit and resume the old collaboration and friendship between British and Iraq peoples.[108]

The political situation began to improve as the British military gained the upper hand in Iraq. The Regent arrived back in the country and convened a Council of State charged with forming a government. To help prepare the way for a change of government, Britain began an intense propaganda campaign, dropping pamphlets over Iraq to targeted populations.[109] British officials received vague reports that Rashid Ali's government was falling apart and losing support. Confirmation came on May 30 when the Mayor of Baghdad informed Cornwallis that Rashid Ali and his government, as well as the officers of the Golden Square, the Mufti and their followers had left Iraq to seek refuge in Iran. The Mayor of Baghdad and a committee of four local leaders took over

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Secretary of the Army Department of India supported these views, and was particularly opposed to negotiations with Rashid Ali's government because he was an Axis agent and "our prestige in all Muslim countries will inevitably be seriously diminished by recognition." Secretary of the Army Dept., India to Secretary of State for India, 12 May 1941, FO 371/27069.

108 C in C and AOC Middle East to General Basrah AOC Habbaniyah, 11 May 1941, FO 371/27069.

109 Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1941, 8 March 1942, FO 371/27072.

administration and asked for an armistice and the return of the Regent to Baghdad.[110] The Foreign Office suggested terms for an armistice that dealt with both political and military issues and a government that would fulfill the treaty "in both letter and spirit."[111] Once the armistice was settled, the main British priority was to ensure the isolation of the exiled leaders in Iran and prevent them from serving as Axis collaborators.[112]

While the armistice settled official relations between Iraq and Britain, it did not bring calm to Baghdad. The city was wracked by looters and riots, which targeted the Jewish community. The Foreign Office sent instructions preventing British troops from

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110 Cornwallis to General, Basra, 30 May 1941, FO 371/27073 and Cornwallis to Eden, 6 June 1941, FO 371/27077.

111 The Foreign Office demands included protection of Britain's right during war to put ground and air forces in Iraq as necessary; full military control over the port and base in Basra; Iraq to cut off diplomatic relations with any countries with which Britain was at war; German and Italian personnel and supplies to be handed over to Britain; Iraq to control aliens and censorship; the concentration of the Iraqi air force and military supplies at a location determined by Britain; and the release of all British subjects and material. FO to Baghdad, 31 May 1941, FO 371/27073.

Before Cornwallis received these terms from London, General Clark had three senior Iraqi officers sign an armistice that dealt mostly with military issues. The Foreign Office was concerned that nothing was said in the signed armistice about the underlying issue that had led to the coup and British occupation in the first place: Iraq's relations with Germany and Italy. They realized they could not repudiate a signed armistice, but they hoped Cornwallis would be able to get the Iraqis to agree to these points: "If we miss this opportunity, we may once again be involved in interminable wrangles." FO to Baghdad, 1 June 1941, FO 371/27073. The War Office was less accommodating, expressing its extreme disappointment with the terms. Cornwallis defended Clark, noting that he had been consulted in the drawing up of the armistice and the local committee could not deal with issues of policy. Their immediate aim was to end hostilities. War Office to C in C Middle East, 2 June 1941 and Cornwallis to FO, 2 June 1941, FO 371/27073. The new government did agree in talks with Cornwallis to many of the other conditions, and considered that the events of May implied the cessation of relations with Germany, and on June 8 Cornwallis reported that the Iraqi Government had officially broken off relations with Italy. Cornwallis to FO, 8 June 1941, FO 371/27074.

112 Rashid Ali fled to Iran, and from there made his way to Germany via Turkey. Rashid Ali, the officers of the Golden Square, and other participants in the coup were sentenced in absentia. Those who had been captured were sent to Southern Rhodesia. In January 1942 the Iraqi Government requested that those who were held by Britain be turned over to Iraq, and Britain complied. Two members of the Golden Square were executed in May 1942. Cornwallis to Eden, 24 Jan. 1942, FO 371/31371. In an interesting postscript to this episode, Rashid Ali made a dramatic return to Iraq after the 1958 revolution and led an abortive attempt to overthrow the new regime. As Sluglett observes, "Rashid 'Ali set about planning the sort of coup that he had organized to bring down governments in the 1930s, an utterly unrealistic scheme." Peter Sluglett and Marion-Farouk Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*, revised ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 61.

entering Baghdad to put down the riots as this would have reflected poorly on the Regent.[113] Cornwallis reported that Iraqi army and police officers instigated the riots to "take advantage of the temporary absence of responsible authority." They also participated in the looting and refused to crack down on the riots without the direct order of the Regent. He concluded: "In those few hours however hundreds of families were ruined and brutal outrages were committed which all right minded persons will for long remember with shame and horror."[114]

In the months following the Rashid Ali coup British officials both in Iraq and London reflected on the causes of the coup and its long-term impact. These official post-mortem reports addressed both the strengths and weaknesses of Britain's response to events in Iraq. The conclusions drawn from this episode influenced British policy towards Iraq for the remainder of the war. Facing criticism at home for the government's response to the Iraqi crisis, Churchill argued that the coup was not the result of an intelligence failure, but rather lack of troops. In response to accusations that the situation in Iraq was a sign of the failure of Britain's intelligence and diplomatic services, he noted in a House of Commons debate on May 7, 1941: "We have been told that the Foreign Office never knows anything that is going on in the world, and that our organisation is quite unadapted to meet the present juncture. But we have known only too well what was

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113 Warner, 117.

114 Cornwallis to Eden, 11 July 1941, FO 371/27078.

going on in Iraq, and as long ago as last May, a year ago, the Foreign Office began to ask for troops to be sent there to guard the line of communications. We had not the troops."[115]

Ambassador Cornwallis attributed the coup to four developments during the inter-war period. The most important was Britain's gradually weakened presence in Iraq after the end of the Mandate. While Britain had large numbers of troops in Egypt and Palestine, Britain's presence in Iraq was maintained with a small RAF contingent and no troops: "Over a period of seven or eight years we had sat back and watched our influence decline. It was small wonder that, comparing our apparent weakness and ineffectiveness with the dominating position we had held only ten years before, the people of Iraq considered that, much as some might regret it, our time was done." Britain's position had been further weakened by the death of King Faisal in 1933, which deprived Iraq of its "chief unifying force"; Germany's growing influence; and finally the rebellion in Palestine in the late 1930s and "the harsh, but ineffective, measures which we were taking to suppress it." The revolt failed due to Britain's timely intervention in sending troops to Basra, and also to the lack of support that Rashid Ali received.[116]

Britain's weak presence in Iraq was not limited to the military sphere, but extended to its diplomatic representation as well. Albert Hourani criticized the Embassy in Baghdad under Newton in the period preceding the coup. Pro-Allied Iraqis "were not helped, so many of them complained to me, by the attitude which the diplomat who then held the post of British Ambassador took up." Britain's policy towards Iraq in the early

[115] Churchill's conclusion has an eerie contemporary ring: "We are not at war with Iraq; we are dealing with a military dictator who attempted to subvert the constitutional Government, and we intend to assist the Iraqis to get rid of him and get rid of the military dictatorship at the earliest possible moment." Extract from House of Commons debate, 7 May 1941, FO 371/27068.

war years represented "a failure of British publicity in the real sense: inadequate efforts had been made to convince the Iraqis that they had a permanent and positive interest in co-operating with Great Britain."[117] The British concluded that the way to avoid a repeat of the 1941 coup would be to strengthen Britain's military, diplomatic, and publicity presence for the rest of the war.

Albert Hourani's 1943 report on Arab nationalism provided a different perspective on the events leading up to the Rashid Ali Coup, focusing on the emotional climate in the country in the early war years:

> It is clear that the rising cannot be regarded as a planned and rational movement…It sprang from the sense of grievance against the universe, from resentment against a world which regarded the Arabs as insignificant and as inferior, from the feeling of powerlessness and the consequent despair. It was a gesture of defiance, a challenge to Great Britain, to the West and to the universe; an assertion that the Arabs were something and could not be ignored. It was also an attempt by the Arabs to convince themselves that they were capable of resolution and action. Then again it sprang from the craving for change…[118]

It took the form of a military uprising because the leaders of the revolt "had learned their politics in the days of secret societies, of the last war and of the post-war disturbances." It was fundamentally an anti-British, anti-colonial revolt due to the building resentment against British policy in Palestine and the sense of frustration with Britain's response to Arab demands. As one of Hourani's Iraqi friends explained to him, "In those few weeks…I I [sic] knew what an independent Arab State meant."

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[116] Cornwallis to Eden, Cornwallis' valedictory, 30 March 1945, FO371/45302.

[117] Hourani 1943 Report. Hankey, an official at the Foreign Office, offered a similar critique of Britain's representatives in Iraq before the coup: "above all, we seem to have lost contact with the people. Perhaps there is something in the criticism which one sometimes hears made of our Foreign Service, that we tend to restrict our contacts in foreign countries too much to official circles and above all that we stay too much in the capitals." Minute by Hankey, 19 April 1945, FO371/45302.

[118] Hourani 1943 Report.

In the aftermath of the war, as Hourani explained, an old myth died and a new one was born. During the inter-war period Syrian and Palestinian Arab nationalists flocked to Iraq: "The Arabs not only of Iraq but of the neighbouring countries believed that the Iraqi Army was destined to unite Arab Asia by blood and iron as Prussia had united Germany." The failure of the coup led to a loss of faith on both sides of this collaborative relationship: the foreign Arab nationalists realized that Iraq would not be able to deliver on these promises, while Iraq expelled these foreigners from the country in the aftermath of the military occupation: "Iraqi Prussianism is dead." Yet a new myth was developing, with the main participants in the revolt taking on the status of martyrs in the eyes of many Iraqis. [119]

Officials examined not only the roots of the coup, but the attitude of the Iraqi people towards the events of April-May 1941. Cornwallis noted that most Iraqis did not support the revolt: "his revolt came as a profound shock to them. They were ashamed, and wanted to make amends."[120] Hourani offered a more nuanced assessment. While their was a general sense of shame and guilt in the aftermath of the coup, he warned that "The nobler few felt deeply the guilt of having committed an act of political immorality; the majority were ashamed, not of the movement itself, but of its utter failure." For most Iraqis, the failure of the coup was not due to faulty ideology but faulty tactics on the part of the leaders.[121]

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[119] Ibid. and Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq,* 71.

[120] Cornwallis to Eden, Cornwallis' valedictory, 30 March 1945, FO371/45302.

[121] Hourani 1943 Report. Batatu also emphasized the popular nature of the revolt: "The War of 1941 was a great spur to their national feeling. They had not been of one mind about the intervention of the army in state affairs or the political tendencies of the leading officers, but when the war came, they quickly

The British feared that the Rashid Ali coup might stir up nationalist activity in other parts of the Middle East. Ambassador Lampson reported that there was little reaction in Egypt to the events in Iraq, due in his opinion to the Egyptian public's disinterest in anything outside of Egypt and the much closer war in the Western Desert. However, he warned that "If Rashid Ali gets away with it, his example might inspire hopes that Ali Maher's return to power might equally be imposed on us."[122] Future Egyptian President Anwar al Sadat's description of the response of the young Egyptian army officers to news of events in Iraq reveals that Lampson's fears were well founded: "For us in Egypt, the rebellion in Iraq acted as a kind of safety valve which prevented an explosion. It was the first sign of the liberation of the Arab world, and we followed the course of the revolt with admiration."[123] The dangers posed by the possible spread of the anti-British spirit in Iraq to other parts of the region was demonstrated in the Aziz al Masri affair. On May 16, 1941 a former Egyptian Chief of Staff, who had been removed from office under pressure from Britain, attempted to fly to Iraq on a stolen airplane and was caught. After his capture, Aziz al Masri said he was going to Baghdad to try and stop the revolt.[124] To Sadat and the other young officers the failure of this mission thwarted their plans "to attack the British and make Egypt a second Iraq."[125]

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forgot their differences, save for a minority. In Baghdad and the other towns the sentiments of Shi'i and Sunni and Arab and Kurd merged for the moment and while the fighting lasted." Batatu, 30.

[122] Lampson to FO, 6 April 1941, FO371/27429.

[123] Anwar al Sadat, *Revolt on the Nile*, 38-39.

[124] Aziz al Masri stated that he had met with a British officer beforehand and discussed the situation in Iraq. It turned out that Colonel Thornhill, who was a member of SOE operating in Egypt, had had lunch with al Masri four days before his flight. While Thornhill was adamant that he did not encourage the mission, he did agree to pass Aziz al Masri's suggestions on to Brigadier Clayton. This episode caused great embarrassment not only to SOE, but also to the Embassy and Foreign Office. While Britain wished to prosecute Aziz al Masri for treason, a trial would bring up this issue of British involvement. Lampson first heard of the British connection in this case from the Egyptian Prime Minister, and the involvement of SOE

The British occupation of Iraq after the Rashid Ali coup led to a realignment of political forces in the country. The Iraqi army was not dismantled but was purged and maintained in a perpetual state of weakness. The military had played a key role in all changes of government in Iraq since the 1936 Bekr Sidqi coup, but it would now be removed from the political equation for the remainder of the war and, at least temporarily, was no longer a factor in internal politics. The Regent returned to Baghdad after the coup with British support, but paid the price in the loss of local popularity. As Batatu dramatically explained, "Time never effaced from the hearts of Iraqis the remembrance that in their hour of danger the Hashemite house stood on the side of their enemies… 'Abd-ul-Ilah's every act appeared as a betrayal." Having lost its nationalist credentials, the monarchy came to rely more heavily on both British support and conservative interests in the country, in particular the tribal sheikhs: "from this point onward nationalists and Hashemites moved on different planes of thought and feeling. The monarchy lost its nationalist physiognomy, and the nationalists became at heart antimonarchic."[126] Many Iraqi historians use the term "revolution" to describe the coup,

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only exacerbated his frustration with military authorities operating in Cairo. He expressed his anger to the Foreign Office: "Personally I feel most strongly that I have been placed in an intolerable situation owing to the act of a subordinate military officer, knowledge of which came to me only after the Prime Minister had made his disclosure, though many weeks had elapsed since the arrest of El Masri." Lampson to FO, 9 Aug. 1941, FO 371/27431. The Egyptian Prime Minister decided to go ahead with the trial, and Thornhill was sent back to England. Lampson to FO, 28 Aug. 1941, FO 371/27432.

[125] Sadat, 38-39. The plot had been foiled but for Sadat it was one more step in the inexorable march towards revolution in Egypt: "As it was, the formidable reserves of violence in the Egyptian people remained latent and suppressed. It was all the more certain that revolution would come." Sadat, 42.

[126] Batatu, 30. This realignment had real implications for the social structure of Iraq. The monarchy's support of traditional tribal leaders led to increased consolidation of land in their hands, reducing rural Iraqis "in many regions to a status akin to serfdom" and transforming the monarchy from a "unifying" role to being "a retarding social factor." Batatu, 32.

but its result was far from revolutionary. It was rather a reassertion of the conservative social order of Iraq with British support.[127]

The events of April-May 1941 are often referred to as the Rashid Ali Coup, but the Iraqi Prime Minister's actual role in this dramatic confrontation with Britain was overshadowed by that of the army officers who put him in power. As Cornwallis admitted after the fact:

> In the light of later events it may reasonably be concluded that the rebel Government was the Government of the Golden Square, and not a Government of Rashid Ali relying on the unqualified support of the army. As a politician of practised cunning with a considerable following he was certainly more than a figure-head; as such a politician, indeed, he was indispensable, but at the same time far from all-powerful.[128]

While the British were certainly aware at the time that the real moving force behind the coup was the group of four Iraqi army Colonels, the "Golden Square," the Embassy focused its efforts and its behind-the-scenes negotiations on Rashid Ali. This episode reveals one of the dangers inherent in Britain's focus on Rashid Ali as the "Public Enemy No. 1" in Iraq, and in any policy that puts such a strong emphasis on individual personalities. It led the British to focus on the removal of this figure from power, leading

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[127] Durra titles one section of his work "The Iraqi-British War: War not Revolution" in order to make this point. The conflict did not meet the traditional definition of a revolution, which he defined as action against an internal system of government with the goal of overthrowing it. Instead, it was a military conflict between two armies. A new government seized power only when the old had been forced to flee. Mahmud al-Durra, *Al Harb al-Iraqiya al-Britaniya.* [The Iraqi-British War], 207-208. Despite this clarification, the use of revolutionary language in accounts of the coup reflects its important place in the historical memory of Iraq.

[128] Annual Review for Iraq 1941, 8 March 1942, FO 371/31371. Hanna Batatu offers a similar assessment of Rashid Ali's role in this coup, noting that his "links with the Four Colonels did not antedate March 1940, so that his presence a year later at the very height of the movement was an accident. It merely suited the army officers and their principal mentor, the mufti of Jerusalem, to have him--an ex-prime minister--in that spot. It does not follow, of course, that his role was largely decorative, but it would be a mistake to so present the events of 1941 as to suggest that he was the pivot around which the movement revolved. A balanced picture would show him more as the chief spokesman than the chief initiator of policy in the critical months of April and May of that year." Batatu, 456-457.

them to overlook the deeper structural issues underlying local discontent. Britain's military action against Iraq in 1941 achieved Britain's short-term goals of wartime cooperation, but only pushed the deep-seated resentment at foreign interference and Iraq's conservative political system under the surface. As Mahmoud al-Durra observed, the 1958 revolution was "one of the fruits of this war and a link in the chain which strengthened the Iraqi people to face the journey which lay before them."[129]

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[129] Durra, 7. Durra served in the Iraqi army during the coup, giving his account special interest. For a useful review of this work and other Iraqi sources on the coup, see Ayad al-Qazzaz, "The Iraqi-British War of 1941: A Review Article," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7 (1976): 591-596. Cleveland notes the influence that the Rashid Ali coup had on Saddam Hussein, whose uncle had participated in the 1941 coup and been imprisoned: "It is reported that Husayn was deeply affected by his uncle's lingering hostility toward the British and the British-backed monarchy." William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, third edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 408.

Chapter 5: The Ali Maher Administration in Egypt and the 1942 Abdin Palace Incident

While the Embassy in Baghdad was carrying out its campaign to remove Rashid Ali from office, British officials in Cairo were working toward the same end with respect to the Egyptian Prime Minister, Ali Maher. The British Ambassador, Sir Miles Lampson, firmly believed that Ali Maher was the main obstacle to cooperation and stability in Egypt which were vital to the Allied war effort. The British campaign against "Public Enemy Number 1" in Egypt did not end in a military occupation, but in an impressive but bloodless show of British force and in the installation of a friendly government in 1942.

The Abdin Palace incident was the closest Britain came to unseating the King of Egypt in order to gain compliance on war aims, but it was neither the first nor the last time that Britain contemplated this extreme form of intervention. In fact, Ambassador Lampson and the Embassy staff considered this possibility no less than five times during the course of World War II in response to internal crises in Egypt.[1] The aim of the first of these episodes, in June 1940, was to remove Ali Maher from office, while the second, the Abdin Palace Incident of 1942, was an attempt to prevent his return to power at a particularly challenging period in the war. Britain achieved its aims in both episodes without the actual use of force, but this intervention had long-term implications for Anglo-Egyptian relations. An in-depth examination of these first two interventions reveals the intricacies of British negotiations with Egypt through the mechanism of the British Embassy and its network of intermediaries. While Britain was intervening to an

unprecedented degree, it was not unilaterally imposing its will, as the June 1940 attempt to replace Ali Maher clearly demonstrates. Britain's response to these internal crises was a result of the interplay of internal Egyptian politics, Ambassador Lampson's own personal style of diplomacy, and the dramatic wartime events of the summer of 1940 and winter of 1942.

The Embassy's relations with the Ali Maher administration, which came to power in August 1939, did not get off to a good start. One of the first acts of the new Prime Minister was to purge the government of some of the most pro-British officials. Ambassador Lampson took these dismissals, particularly that of Amin Osman, an Egyptian Under Secretary of Sate for Finance publicly known to be one of Britain's staunchest supporters, as a real affront to British prestige.[2] In the eyes of British officials, these dismissals had serious repercussions for Britain's attempt to win support and local collaborators: "If the impression gets abroad that any Egyptian whose friendliness towards us is evident incurs a real danger of losing his appointment, we will be denied the collaboration we need, and friction will incre ase to the point of danger."[3] Ali Maher argued that the officials were dismissed not because they were pro-British, but because they were inefficient.[4] Lampson admitted that some of the dismissals were justified; one

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[1] In summer 1940 to unseat Ali Maher, the Abdin Palace incident of February 1942, during the Black Book Affair of 1943, and twice in 1944: once in response to the malaria crisis and again during the Ghazzali crisis.

[2] For Amin Osman's role as intermediary between the Embassy and Government of Egypt, see Chapter 2.

[3] Minute by Thompson, 13 Jan. 1940, FO 371/24622.

[4] The Egyptian Ambassador to Britain explained to Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, why Amin Osman and another Under Secretary of State for Finance had been dismissed: "Abdul Kheir had

dismissed official was "rather stupid but happens also to be friendly to us," while another who was "not overcompetent…also happens to be a friend of ours."[5] But to Britain, loyalty was valued more than administrative effectiveness. The Embassy was caught between praising Ali Maher's efficiency in cleaning up the government, while at the same time considering the dismissal of pro-British officials, regardless of whether or not they were capable or honest administrators, as an affront.[6]

While Ali Maher was engaged in his campaign to purge the government of pro-British officials in the name of efficiency, the British tried to purge Egypt of what they considered to be unhealthy pro-Axis influences. German agents were a top priority, but they also targeted Italians working in the Palace. A similar campaign was undertaken in Iraq at the same time aimed at Syrian and Palestinian teachers and the Mufti's followers in Iraq. Despite the importance that Britain placed on removing these groups, both countries resisted British pressure as long as possible, and the governments' inability to deal with this problem to British satisfaction was a main cause of increased British intervention.[7] The British justified these demands on the grounds of security and the

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simply been inefficient, while Amin Osman who, as he had already told me, had not had the necessary experience, was also much too occupied with politics to devote the necessary time to purely financial work." Halifax to Lampson, 24 Jan. 1940, FO 371/24623.

[5] Lampson to FO, 3 Jan. 1940, FO 371/24622.

[6] The Embassy had cause for concern regarding these dismissals, as their significance was not lost on the Egyptian public. One of the Egyptian comic newspapers published a cartoon showing the Rector of the Egyptian University, Lutfi al Sayed Pasha, "in a suppliant attitude before me [Lampson] begging to be spared the K.B.E. recently bestowed on him and urging that he had a large family which he could not maintain if dismissed." Lampson criticized Ali Maher for encouraging the publication of pictures and articles showing the Embassy in "the unfavourable light of interfering in Egyptian internal politics." Lampson to Halifax, 7 Feb. 1940, FO 371/24623. The issue of the dismissal of pro-British officials and these cartoons developed into a major diplomatic row and it challenged Britain's very prestige in Egypt. Halifax to Lampson, 17 Feb. 1940, FO 371/24623.

[7] The British faced similar challenges with the German community in Iran and the continued presence of Germans in Iran was cited as a main cause for the 1941 Anglo-Soviet occupation of that country.

interests of the war effort, but to Egyptian and Iraqi leaders it was a blatant example of British interference in local matters. Resisting these demands was a way to challenge British authority and assert national sovereignty.

Although Ali Maher technically adhered to the letter of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in meeting Britain's demands for the war effort, in the Embassy's opinion his actions clearly did not reflect the treat's spirit. His unwillingness to have Egypt declare war, and his apparent campaign against pro-British officials led Lampson to the conclusion that he needed to be replaced. Ali Maher should leave office due to internal pressure, rather than from Embassy influence, so that British intervention would not be apparent: "as I see things, his going must be through his own shiftiness and mistakes, not through action by us. Though I can conceive circumstances-for instance, if the war spreads here-when we might well have to step in and impose our will."[8] The changing circumstances of the war in May and June 1940, particularly the fall of Holland, Belgium and France, and the Italian declaration of war which brought the war front closer to Egypt, proved to be the very circumstances that called for this increased British intervention in Egypt.

The change in the external war situation coincided with three new developments within Egypt: increased cooperation between the opposition parties, growing discontent within the Egyptian administration itself with Ali Maher's rule, and the Wafd declaration of April 1940. The rapprochement in 1940 between Mohamed Mahmoud, former Prime Minister and the official leader of the opposition in Parliament, and Ahmed Maher, the leader of the Saadist party, gave the opposition movement new strength. In addition,

many officials in Ali Maher's administration grew increasingly unhappy with his policies, citing his arbitrary treatment of officials which "swelled the volume of discontent against a Prime Minister who has no party or popular backing and is dependent solely on the support of the King" and his "monopolisation of power."[9] This intersection of the external circumstances of the war and the internal political situation led to a renewed drive to remove Ali Maher that was ultimately successful, although not in the way the Embassy expected.

More concrete signs of discontent were the two formal protests presented to the Embassy. The first came from Ahmed Hussein, leader of the Young Egypt party, calling for Lampson's replacement and protesting the removal from office of Aziz al Masri, the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army.[10] While this group represented a security threat, a more significant protest from a political perspective was that of the Wafd party, presented to Lampson on April 1. Declaring the Wafd's commitment to Britain as an ally and to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, the petition also made demands for five concessions from Britain: the withdrawal of British troops after the war, Egyptian participation in post-war

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8 Lampson to Seymour, 29 Jan. 1940, FO 371/24623.

9 Lampson to Halifax, 4 May 1940, FO 371/24623. It is important to note that these reports of discontent within the administration came from talks Smart and Hamilton of the Oriental Secretariat had with these officials. While the Embassy took these reports from discontented officials as real indications of Ali Maher's unpopularity, it is difficult to gauge the true status of his position, since those who were unhappy with the administration would have been personally motivated to complain to the Embassy, which was known to have serious qualms about the Prime Minister and would offer a sympathetic ear.

10 Young Egypt was known for its anti-British sentiments and ties to Italy. Lampson called on Ali Maher to crack down on the party, which he did by cutting off palace and government contributions to its newspaper and seizing its printing press. Middle East Intelligence Centre to Smart, report on "Egypt's Youth," 26 March 1940, FO 371/24625. Britain considered Aziz al Masri to be one of the most dangerous and pro-Axis Egyptian officials during World War II and resented his attempts to obstruct the work of the British Military Mission in Egypt. Pressure from Lampson ultimately led to his dismissal. Lampson to Eden, Annual Review for 1940, 28 Jan. 1941, FO 371/27463. For his dramatic failed flight to Iraq, see chapter 4. For a biographical sketch of Aziz al Masri, see Majid Khadduri, *Arab Contemporaries*, chapter 2.

peace negotiations, post-war negotiations to recognize Egyptian rights in the Sudan, withdrawal of Britain's request for an "état de siège" in Egypt, and for Britain to address the serious economic problems in Egypt relating to the cotton crop.[11] The Wafd addressed the petition to the Egyptian people but Mustafa al-Nahas, the Wafd party leader, presented it to the Embassy rather than to the King, which upset the Palace.[12]

There was disagreement among British officials as to how to respond to this petition. The Oriental Counsellor and Lampson's main adviser, Sir Walter Smart, strongly opposed giving such a firm response to the Wafd "on the ground of future policy."[13] The Foreign Office disagreed, instructing Lampson to inform Nahas that the petition "has caused a most painful impression upon His Majesty's Government" and that it was regarded as "…a deliberate attempt to play at internal politics at a moment when Great Britain is involved in a struggle in which the fate and independence of Egypt is as much at stake as our own."[14] Most of the Embassy staff supported the Foreign Office directive, but Lampson shared some of Smart's doubts. The Wafd had the support of the majority of the Egyptian people and he feared that "we are, perhaps drifting into support of the Palace and Ali Maher with no popular backing behind them which is not altogether a pleasant outlook." Lampson considered the Foreign Office's response to be "Pretty hot!" but he duly acted on the instructions. He was privately "relieved that I was given no discretion" due to his own reservations about taking such a strong line against the

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11 Lampson to FO, 1 April 1940, FO 371/24624.

12 Lampson to Eden, Annual Review for 1940, 28 Jan. 1941, FO 371/27463. Lampson observed that the Embassy was the obvious target of the petition, and in his diary he wrote that he considered this to be an issue of internal politics and a "fatal blunder" by the Wafd which "seems to play into the hands of the Palace and the present Government. What fools these Wafd people are!" Killearn Diaries, 1 April 1940.

13 Lampson to Seymour, 8 April 1940, FO 371/24624.

majority party and against the advice of his advisers.[15]

Lampson noted that in the short-term the Wafd petition "represents a deliberate stealing of Aly Maher's thunder" and provided the groundwork for the Wafd to potentially instigate an anti-British movement.[16] It also reflected an attempt by the Wafd to recreate itself as a nationalist party. The Wafd had signed the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, which had fulfilled its main reason for existing as a party; after that landmark event it had been a party looking for a purpose. This petition with its "extremist nationalist policy has resulted in some reassertion of its prestige and nuisance-powers." Yet the petition also had potential long-term consequences and "…may possibly prove to have marked a turning-point in the history of Anglo-Egyptian relations since the Treaty. The Wafd's demand for the withdrawal of our troops from Egypt on the conclusion of peace looks like becoming the theoretical basis of Egyptian policy."[17] It gave the British a sense of what the Egyptians might demand after the war, setting the bar much higher than had previously been expected. However, this petition would also come back to haunt the Wafd when they returned to power in 1942 with British support. After making these demands while in opposition, other Egyptian nationalists would try to hold them accountable when in power.

According to Egyptian historian Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Wafd had other

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14 FO to Lampson, 4 April 1940, FO 371/24624.

15 Killearn Diaries, 5 April 1940. Lampson, reflecting on the change in government that took place in Britain, also observed: "Do I read in this rather new peremptory tone the first fruits of Winston Churchill's direction of the War Cabinet? I wonder!"

16 Lampson to Halifax, 4 April 1940, FO 371/24624.

17 Lampson to Halifax, 4 May 1940, FO 371/24623. As Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser pointed out, this memo "was the first time that full evacuation of British forces from Egypt after the war, instead of their

reasons for presenting this petition. It had a "dual message" which was not lost on the British, "signalling on the one hand that the Wafd wished to be reinstated in power as the voice of the majority in the country, and on the other that its presence in the opposition could be politically dangerous to Britain…"[18] The context of the petition, particularly Britain's losses on the war front and the growing economic problems in Egypt which were leading to real discontent, gave further power to this message and its threat of unrest.[19] From this perspective, a Wafd government was the only hope for stability, and thus the Wafd petition serves as a direct link in the changing British position on Ali Maher and their eventual call for a new government. It also explains how the British, who were publicly incensed by the Wafd petition in April 1940, could two months later turn around and support Nahas's return to power, although unsuccessfully.

During late spring 1940, the both Embassy and the Egyptian political parties were actively working to replace the Ali Maher government. In May Amin Osman resumed his role as intermediary. He approached Lampson on behalf of Mohamed Mahmoud to determine if the Embassy would support the opposition's attempt to replace the Ali Maher government. The Ambassador responded that the policy of the Embassy was "We worked loyally with the Prime Minister of the day whoever he was."[20] When Amin

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mere withdrawal to the Canal Zone, had been discussed." Nasser, *Britain and the Egyptian Nationalist Movement 1936-1952*, 54.

[18] Ibid., 56.

[19] Ibid., 55. Nasser also notes that the Egyptian historian Muhammad Gamal al-Masdi argued that this petition was "a pressurising tactic aimed at securing power on the premise that a Wafd government would ensure stability in Egypt in time of war." [69]

[20] Killearn Diaries, 21 May 1940 and Lampson to FO, 21 May 1940, FO 371/24625. Thompson at the Foreign Office was concerned with Lampson's renewed meetings with Amin Osman, since he "is extremely suspect in official circles in Cairo and too many interviews between him and the Ambassador will revive the fear of intrigue against the present Government that were rife last January." Minute by Thompson, 28 May 1940, FO 371/24625.

Osman returned just a couple of weeks later, Lampson was more encouraging in his reply. He "could have nothing to do with any sort of intrigue…against the present Prime Minister," but he was happy with the line being taken in the Wafd press and its support for the alliance with Britain: "I must repeat I wasn't playing internal politics but I hoped he would let his Wafd friends know that we all of us should be only too pleased if somehow or other, without any intervention on our part in politics, the Wafd could see their way to taking part in the guidance of the country."[21] A week later he summoned Amin Osman and informed him that he and the Foreign Office felt it was time for the political parties to form a new government and Amin Osman should encourage this.[22]

In addition to these hints of encouragement to the backroom political intrigues of Amin Osman and the opposition parties, Lampson was also contemplating intervention on a much larger and more public scale. Soon after his first visit from Amin Osman the Ambassador met with the military authorities to discuss the possible imposition of British martial law in Egypt, given the seriousness of Britain's wartime position in mid-1940. Ali Maher was being "systematically obstructive" over the issue of counter-propaganda against Italy, was unwilling to cut off all ties with Italy and had not yet interned all Germans in Egypt.[23] In the case of Egypt refusing to cooperate, these officials considered the possibility of deposing Farouk and replacing him with Prince Mohamed Aly, the Crown Prince and the most publicly pro-British member of the Egyptian royal family. They set up an "ultra hush-hush" committee to discuss how they might take over Egypt if

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21 Killearn Diaries, 6 June 1940.

22 Lampson wrote: "I suggested that Amin Osman should do this as on his own, for I did not wish anyone later on to say that I had let them down. Amin said he would do so and would be careful not to bring me into it. He would return later and report." Killearn Diaries, 14 June 1940.

necessary and "to consider what ex-Egyptian (British) officials were available if we had to contemplate taking over the running of the country."[24] The situation in Egypt, when placed within the larger wartime context, was considered serious enough to justify this move which would completely upset Britain's status quo policy.

The Embassy staff debated the various possibilities for a new administration, and there was dissent among the advisers as to the best solution. Lampson preferred a Wafd government under Nahas, since he had the most support throughout the country. Smart and Watson, the former Financial Adviser to the Government of Egypt, both had a better sense of internal Egyptian politics and strongly objected as this plan would alienate "all the other elements in the country outside the Wafd; not only Ahmed Maher and his party, the Saadists, but all the intelligenzia, [sic] the Palace, bureaucracy, and even the Army." Lampson took the advice of his advisers and changed his telegram to the Foreign Office, calling for a Coalition government rather than a Wafd government.[25]

While Lampson maintained an external façade of non-interference in the government, he was quite active behind the scenes during June. On June 16 he met with Amin Osman three times, sending him back and forth to consult with various political leaders to reach a compromise.[26] In the end Lampson agreed to Amin Osman's suggestion that he meet with Farouk, insist that he replace Ali Maher and "urge him to

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[23] Lampson to FO, 13 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

[24] Lampson to Seymour, 31 May 1940, FO 371/24625.

[25] Killearn Diaries, 15 June 1940.

[26] Nahas wanted a Wafd government, but he was also willing to accept a neutral government, suggesting two possible Prime Ministers. Lampson did not consider these men to be experienced enough, and sent Osman back to consult both Mahmoud and Nahas again. The latter, working through Amin Osman, reassured Lampson that they would give Seifullah Yusri, one of the prospects, a strong cabinet to counteract his inexperience. Killearn Diaries, 16 June 1940.

send for the leader of the opposition (Mohamed Mahmoud), and Nahas as leader of the biggest popular party in the country, and abide by their advice."[27]

Later that night Lampson had a change of heart and realized that "we were on the verge of doing something which seemed to me rather silly, namely, agreeing to a P.M. who is a complete nonentity and who carries no weight whatever. I thought therefore that common sense dictated that we should cut the cackle and call in the Wafd straight away." He consulted his advisers and once again Smart and Watson strongly opposed this line of action. During the meeting a Foreign Office telegram arrived which included many of the same points which Smart and Watson had made, "which quite definitely plumped for some compromise pointing out just those disadvantages of a purely Wafd administration which my advisers had put before me yesterday." Lampson decided this was a "sufficiently strong coincidence" to convince him to change his mind.[28] The Foreign Office agreed on the need for a new government, and concurred that Lampson should raise the issue with Farouk, but also noted that a non-Wafdist Prime Minister would be preferable as the Palace would not welcome a Wafd government.[29]

Lampson met with Farouk and presented his demand that Ali Maher's government be dismissed. Both the Egyptian King and Prime Minister responded by sending protests to London, in an attempt to circumvent the Embassy.[30] Back in Cairo,

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] FO to Lampson, 16 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

[30] Farouk wrote to the King of England, protesting Lampson's demand and repeating Egypt's intentions to honor the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and informing the King that "the Ambassador is not serving the interests of Great Britain." Translation of King Farouk's message, 19 June 1940, FO 371/24625. The Egyptian Ambassador in London, Nashaat, presented an Aide-Memoire to the Secretary of State along the

the Embassy received a string of visitors with a stake in the change of government. Prince Mohamed Ali came to suggest that they needed a stronger King, and that if "he was on the Throne the whole thing would be over in 5 minutes…."[31] Ahmed Maher told Lampson that even though he did not support his brother's policies, Ali Maher had a lot of support from others and he urged the Embassy to allow him to remain in office.

As June dragged on, there was still no resolution to the issue, and the Ambassador grew increasingly impatient with the Government of Egypt's attempts to buy time. Lampson and General Wavell, the Commander in Chief Middle East, felt that they needed the authority to use the imposition of British martial law as a threat, even though they did not want to actually have to follow through because of the commitment of British troops that this would entail. The Foreign Office opposed this tactic, since it would break the treaty and allow the King and Ali Maher to position themselves as defenders of Egyptian independence in the popular mind.[32] Lampson was deeply disappointed by this response and what he saw as the Foreign Office's weak position and "complete absence of any tone of decision. In as many words they say to me that it is up to me to get a satisfactory Government without a blow-up which we here know to be a physical impossibility."[33] He met with his staff and decided to inform the Foreign Office of the seriousness of the situation in Egypt, particularly the fact that Ali Maher did not intend to leave office and the King did not plan to make him do so, meaning that "For all

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same lines, in which Ali Maher laid out all that Egypt had done to aid the war effort. Aide Memoire, 18 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

31 Killearn Diaries, 19 June 1940.

32 FO to Lampson, 20 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

33 Killearn Diaries, 20 June 1940.

practical purposes we are now without a government with which we can co-operate."[34] He proposed a three-stage plan for dealing with the situation that would ultimately have led to British administration of Egypt under martial law.[35] Lampson and his staff were asking for permission to take over the administration of Egypt as they had during World War I if necessary, a step which had earlier been rejected as unfeasible.

The Foreign Office agreed to these strong measures, changing its earlier tone: "It is we who are making this new Govt…And as we shall get the blame for any Italian air-raids now, we may as well get what temporary credit there is for reinstating in part at least a 'popular front' Government."[36] Egypt's relationship with Italy continued to be the stated reason for Britain's demand for a new government.[37] Lampson conceded in his diary that the Egyptian public believed that the conflict with Ali Maher was at root about Egypt's refusal to declare war on Italy, yet he admitted that "this is in fact quite untrue: actually we would almost prefer now that Egypt should not come in."[38]

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[34] Lampson to FO, 21 June 1940, FO 371/24625. It is significant that, only a few months later, in November 1940, Ambassador Newton in Iraq would make a similar report to the Foreign Office, informing them that Rashid Ali "had now lost the confidence of His Majesty's Government in his ability to collaborate with them." Newton to FO, 26 Nov. 1940, FO 371/24559.

[35] The plan had three stages: if Farouk agreed to dismiss Ali Maher and install a government suitable to Britain, the crisis would be resolved. If not, the second stage would be to contact Nahas and ask him to form a government. If Nahas agreed, Lampson would ask for authorization to offer him full support to convince the King to accept this government, including martial law. If Nahas refused, they would need to "administer the country under martial law with the assistance of any friendly elements who were willing to collaborate with us after we had taken such action." Lampson to FO, 21 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

[36] Minute by Norton, 21 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

[37] While Ali Maher had broken off diplomatic relations with Italy, he was procrastinating in forcing the staff of the Italian Legation to leave the country and interning Italians whom the British Embassy considered to be dangerous. He was also observed having "frequent interviews with the Italian Minister," and the Embassy suspected that he had reached an understanding with Italy that would limit Egypt's cooperation with Britain. Lampson to Eden, Annual Review for 1940, 28 Jan. 1941, FO 371/27463.

[38] Killearn Diaries, 20 June 1940.

So what was the conflict about? Hassan Sabry, an Egyptian politician, asked Lampson this very question: what did Britain really want from Egypt? Lampson replied: "what we wanted was very simple. The Government should be as representative as possible; it was essential that it should have the backing of the people; and it was essential that they should co-operate loyally with their ally not only according to the letter but the spirit of the treaty."[39] A government with popular support would be better able to control Egyptian public opinion and counteract enemy propaganda. Several developments in the war effort during the summer of 1940 made a cooperative Egypt even more vital. Not only was the fall of France a serious blow to the Allies, but it had implications for Britain's ability to defend Egypt as well: "our garrison, which was judged adequate so long as the French were acting with us, seems to me in all probability to be inadequate in the event of the French having run out."[40] Italy's declaration of war, and the real threat it posed to Egypt from Libya, brought the war to the borders of Egypt in a way it had not been before. A Wafd government would meet Lampson's three requirements.

Lampson was quite happy with the Foreign Office's forceful response, and noted how rare it was for an Ambassador to be given permission to impose British martial law and to accept the abdication of the King. Wavell assured Lampson on June 23 that they could impose martial law as early as that evening if necessary, as he was bringing in British troops from Palestine.[41] Lampson visited King Farouk and insisted that he consult Nahas in forming the new government, giving him until sunset to agree to this condition. Hassanein, the palace Chamberlain who often served as intermediary between the Palace

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39 Lampson to Seymour, 22 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

40 Killearn Diaries, 17 June 1940.

and the Embassy, later brought Farouk's answer to Lampson: the King agreed to call on Nahas. This did not, however, mean that the situation was resolved. The Egyptian politicians still had to reach an agreement on a new government acceptable to the various parties, the King, and the British, and this led to further delay.[42] Four days of intense political wrangling followed as Egypt's political leaders tried to form a new government.[43] Wavell was also vacillating in his support for the plan to back Nahas with military force.[44] There were rumors that the King planned to flee the country, and Ali Maher, who was serving as Prime Minister ad interim until his replacement could be found, was continuing to run the government and work against the British through the local press.[45]

Frustrated with the lack of progress, Lampson summoned Amin Osman and said that he would like to speak personally to Nahas. Amin Osman responded that Makram Obeid, Nahas's main adviser, "was strongly advising him not to come to the Embassy because he felt it would prejudice both Nahas's cause and the position in the country of

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[41] Ibid., 23 June 1940.

[42] Lampson to FO, 23 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

[43] Nahas insisted that he would only accept an independent government if the Chamber of Deputies were dissolved and new elections held. This was one of Nahas's continual conditions for returning to power. The Wafd had boycotted the 1938 elections in protest after they were turned out of power in 1937, and therefore they did not consider the Chamber that was elected to be truly representative. For the Wafd's fall from power in 1937, see Terry, 241-242. Britain did not intervene to support the Wafd in 1937, and Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser compares the British response in 1937 with their wartime policy. She also notes that some Egyptian historians criticized the Wafd for not setting aside this demand for elections in 1940 in the interest of national unity. Nasser, 64-69; 101 ff. The other political parties were unwilling to concede this point as new elections would have greatly reduced their presence in the Chamber and in the government. Lampson to FO, 24 and 26 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

[44] Venting his frustration in his diary, Lampson wrote of the military authorities: "They breathe fire and thunder one minute and then when one has worked oneself up to responding more or less to their ardour it is quite on the cards that you find they have changed their mind, and when the consequences of the strong action which they advocate begin to show, either run out altogether or to modify all the sting in their earlier advice." Killearn Diaries, 24 June 1940.

[45] Lampson to FO, 26 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

the Embassy if he did."[46] In a pattern that would be repeated throughout the war, Nahas was unwilling to meet directly with Lampson in a time of crisis, forcing the Ambassador to work through Amin Osman and another unnamed intermediary in reaching an agreement with the Wafd.[47] Through numerous meetings with intermediaries and negotiations over Wafd demands, the Embassy and the Wafd came closer to an agreement on a new government that the Wafd, as the majority popular party, could support. Yet there were still points of disagreement. Lampson went so far on June 27 as to summon Amin Osman and inform him that, as the King had not yet summoned Nahas, he would like to know "exactly what form of coercion, should it become necessary, would suit Nahas best…For instance, was it best, from the point of view of Nahas's own position in the country, that we should take charge completely, i.e. Martial Law…What we wanted was that the thing should pass off as smoothly as possible…"[48] The ball was in Nahas's court to call the shots.

In the midst of all this political wrangling behind the scenes, the King seized the upper hand and asked Hassan Sabry, who was considered to be a pro-British politician, to form a government.[49] This was a masterstroke on the part of the Palace, putting in power a man the Embassy could not possibly object to who was also politically weak and unable

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46 Killearn Diaries, 25 June 1940.

47 The details of what type of government would be formed had real implications for the patron-client networks of the Wafd party. Nahas's reasoning for wanting a neutral government, rather than a coalition, according to Amin Osman, was that "a neutral Cabinet would arouse less animosity," and at the level of party politics, a neutral government would not require a change of administration within the Ministries, whereas if Nahas came to power his party followers would expect to be given offices as a reward for their support. Killearn Diaries, 26 June 1940.

48 Killearn Diaries, 27 June 1940.

49 Lampson had written of Sabry, only a few days earlier: "He is one of our best friends here. Apt to be a bit of a bull in the china shop when he was in office, but an honest fellow and with considerable strength and integrity of character." Lampson to Seymour, 22 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

to threaten the position of the Palace in Egyptian politics. The Palace had ignored Lampson's demand that the King consult Nahas in forming the government and get the support of the Wafd. This put the Embassy in the position of having made demands that were not met. Lampson concluded that "having committed ourselves as I hold rightfully to Wafd we must hold firm."[50] The only other alternative was to convince the Wafd to accept the new government. Lampson summoned Amin Osman: "It had struck me it was just possible that we might get Nahas to agree that Hassan Sabry was acceptable from his point of view, in which case matters would obviously be very much easier for all of us." He told Amin Osman to find out if Nahas would accept Hassan Sabry and if not, "what form of coercion should most suitably take." [51] The critical question was, would Nahas accept Hassan Sabry as a compromise?

Lampson informed Farouk that they would agree to Hassan Sabry as Prime Minister with certain conditions, such as fulfilling treaty obligations and winning popular support. The latter condition was important as a means of getting the Wafd behind the new government and "To enable us to tell the Wafd that despite their failure to come up to scratch now we have not thrown them over in accepting Hassan Sabri."[52] This crucial about-face came as a result of two developments, the first being the Wafd's unwillingness to compromise with the Embassy. As Amin Osman himself put it to Lampson, the Wafd "are perfectly prepared that we should go on applying force and extracting the chestnuts from the fire for them, but they won't commit themselves to eating the chestnuts if they

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[50] Lampson to FO, 27 June 1940, FO 371/24625.
[51] Killearn Diaries, 27 June 1940.
[52] Lampson to FO, 29 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

seem to them at all indigestible."[53] From the Wafd perspective, it was not worth the compromise, as they were negotiating from a position of power and could afford to bide their time and return to office when conditions were more favorable. The other issue was the deteriorating war situation for the Allies. Wavell had informed Lampson just 5 days earlier that they could impose British martial law in Egypt, but in a meeting with the service chiefs on June 28 they decided not to press for a Nahas government due to the strain it would put on the British military at a crucial moment.[54]

By the end of June 1940 the political crisis was resolved, with King Farouk still on his throne, Ali Maher out of power, and Hassan Sabry, a friend of the Embassy, as Prime Minister and head of a government with neither Wafd participation nor Wafd support. In response to Sabry's question about British goals for Egypt, Lampson had told him that Britain wanted a representative government with popular support that would co-operate with Britain.[55] The new government only met the last of these criteria. The Ambassador philosophically reflected, "I am aware that this Government is not ideal…But then things seldom work out exactly as one would wish and I felt I had to shape my action yesterday to quickly changing situation…" The Wafd had refused to cooperate and at least "King Farouk has had a wholesome jolt and is well aware of the narrowness of his escape."[56]

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53 Killearn Diaries, 28 June 1940.

54 Lampson wrote: "This view was greatly strengthened by the shaky attitude of the French, especially of their Fleet, and I got the impression very clearly that they did not want to have our forces at this particular juncture faced with anything more than can be reasonably avoided." Killearn Diaries, 28 June 1940.

55Lampson to Seymour, 22 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

56 Lampson to FO, 29 June 1940, FO 371/24625.

The Foreign Office was not as convinced, noting that while they got rid of Ali Maher, their "Public Enemy No. 1," and succeeded in "chastening the King, yet the latter and Nahas Pasha from their different angles have out-smarted us-or think they have."[57] Looking back on the events of June in October 1940 Lampson noted that they had scared the King enough to force him to move, while conceding that "The appointment, therefore, of a friendly but politically weak Prime Minister was a master-stroke to conjure this danger while preserving for the Palace the power of influencing the policy of the new Government from behind the scenes." Yet, given the larger developments of the war it seemed unwise to provoke a crisis by replacing the King and declaring British martial law that would have required large numbers of British troops: "Such an eventuality would have involved the diversion of a considerable number of our troops from the front to work of internal security. In view of the inadequacy of our forces in Egypt our military authorities were not prepared for a major crisis if it could be avoided."[58]

The same issue recurred in all the later wartime political crises in Egypt: was the moment militarily opportune, as well as politically opportune for British intervention, and was the threat so severe that it was worth the sacrifice on other fronts? In 1940 the answer was no, while in 1942, in similar political circumstances, the answer was a qualified yes. The same question could be asked of British intervention in other parts of the Middle East. The British occupation of Iraq in 1941 after the Rashid Ali coup was not a militarily opportune moment for intervention, given the situation in Syria, and yet the

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57 Minute by Norton, 1 July 1940, FO 371/24625.

58 Lampson to Halifax, 8 October 1940, FO 371/24627.

risk of losing Iraq at that moment was considered too great and the troops were sent in. A similar line of reasoning led to the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran.

The June 1940 conflict between the Embassy and Palace was not as dramatic as the Abdin Palace incident of 1942, but in its own way it was just as significant. Ambassador Lampson was now putting the weight of the Embassy behind the Wafd, not out of any real affinity for the party but due to a belief that they represented the majority of the country and therefore were in the best position to deliver on Britain's war aims. Lampson held firmly to this belief through the end of his time in Egypt, even while the Wafd's popularity declined as a result of corruption charges and its close ties with Britain. The episode also reveals the challenges of indirect intervention via intermediaries. By mid-June Lampson was taking action that directly contradicted his whole approach to Anglo-Egyptian relations: compromising with the Wafd and the opposition, actively scheming against the government in power, and conceding to the *fait accompli* of Sabry's premiership, imposed by the King against the expressed desire of the Embassy. It demonstrates the extent to which Lampson was swayed by both his advisers, eventually taking their advice against his own instinct, and his local intermediaries, in particular Amin Osman. British intervention may have been vigorous but it still provided room for an Egyptian counter-move.[59]

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[59] This episode challenges Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser's assertion that "Despite the declaration of 28 February 1922 and the Alliance Treaty of 1936, the British government willfully encouraged its representatives to interfere in Egyptian politics. Clear examples of this were the crisis following the assassination of the Egyptian army's *sardar* in 1924 and the situation during the Second World War, when the British directed the course of politics in Egypt exactly as they had done in the time of Cromer." Lampson might have been quite willing to actively intervene, but the minutes of the Foreign Office officials reveal a more cautious attitude. As the events of 1940 show, even when Britain did attempt to guide Egyptian politics it did not always turn out as they planned. Nasser, 99 ff.

"Send for the Wafd"[60]

Despite all the effort the British exerted in removing Ali Maher from power, the new government of Hassan Sabry was shortlived. In December 1940, while addressing the Chamber of Deputies, Sabry had a heart attack and later died. His replacement as Prime Minister was Hussein Sirry, who was equally pro-British and equally weak.[61] The June 1940 Palace-Embassy conflict proved to be merely a prelude to the more dramatic British intervention of 1942.[62] In the intervening months, the inability of the Sabry and Sirry governments to meet Britain's wartime demands would reaffirm for Lampson that installing a Wafd government with widespread popular support was vital.

The most important test case for both Sabry and Sirry was how they would respond to British demands for the internment of the "Palace Italians" and other suspected fifth columnists in Egypt, as well as Ali Maher. [63] The former Prime Minister was out of power but not out of Egypt.[64] This issue took on increased urgency during the

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60 Killearn Diaries, 1 Feb. 1942.

61 Lampson and the Embassy staff often referred to Sirry as their "pocket Napoleon" for being "so very dictatorial and didactic." Lampson to Oliphant, 22 May 1939, FO 371/23305.

62 A point made by Nasser, 70 and Charles D. Smith, "4 February 1942: Its Causes and Its Influence on Egyptian Politics and on the Future of Anglo-Egyptian Relations, 1937-1945," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10 (1979), 460.

63 A number of Italians were employed in the Palace, a vestige of the years King Fuad spent in Italy in his youth. Lampson's campaign against the Palace Italians put him in a personally uncomfortable position. His wife, Lady Lampson, was the daughter of a famous Italian doctor and his British wife. Laurence Grafftey-Smith records in his memoir that "Lampson's efforts to secure the expulsion of the Italian elements on King Farouq's personal staff were met by a coarse retort that he should first get rid of his own Italian in the embassy." Grafftey-Smith, *Bright Levant*, 237.

64 Lampson to FO, 6 April 1941, FO 371/27429. Ali Maher continued to exploit his Palace connections and Lampson lobbied to have him removed from the country. He suggested that Prime Minister Sirry appoint Ali Maher to an important post abroad, such as Minister to Washington, as a means of getting him out of the country. The Prime Minister preferred having him confined to his country estate outside Alexandria, where he would be cut off from his political contacts and his phone conversations would be controlled. Ali Maher refused to leave Cairo, claiming that it was an infringement of the Parliamentary immunity he enjoyed as a Senator and that he would put this question before Parliament, but he was eventually forced into house arrest. Lampson to FO, 9 April 1941, FO 371/27429 and Killearn

early stages of the Rashid Ali coup in Iraq in April 1941. Lampson went so far as to ask Sirry if he would rather deal with fifth columnists himself, or have the British take care of them: "The Prime Minister said his immediate reaction was that he would be immensely relieved if we acted on our own. He would have to protest lustily and all that, pro forma." Sirry pointed out that if he tried to deal with the problem himself he would have to dissolve Parliament, "'the members being 5th columnists almost to a man.'"[65] Ahmed Hussein of the Young Egypt group was arrested in May, and in fall 1941 Hassan al Banna, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood was interned, although Sirry had him released in November out of concern that his internment would lead to a "religious revolution."[66]

The Foreign Office recognized the serious implications of arresting fifth columnists, as Bateman warned: "Once we start 'jugging' or deporting we must be prepared to go the whole hog, and that will eventually mean the imposition of Britsh [sic] military law and government without the Egyptian Parliament."[67] But when Lampson asked for instructions to pass along to Sirry on this issue, they responded by noting their concern at the increasingly defeatist attitude in Egypt, and concluded that "They are

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Diaries, 12 April 1941. The Foreign Office was not convinced of the necessity of taking such a hard line with the former Prime Minister. Bateman was particularly aware of the danger of focusing attention on this individual rather than larger issues. Ali Maher had been effective in providing British needs at the beginning of the war, and "This branding of Aly Maher is all very well but there is nothing very useful to be got from it…I should like to see more reports on making friends than on destroying enemies." Minute by Bateman, 3 April 1941, FO 371/27429.

This was not the end of Ali Maher: In April 1942 he escaped from his country home, gave a speech at the Senate to invoke parliamentary immunity, refused to leave and was eventually captured. He then began a hunger strike to protest the decision to send him into exile in the Sudan. Lampson was concerned that if he died as a result of this strike, he would be viewed as a martyr and Britain would be held responsible. Instead, he was sent to Gharbaniyat, near the Western Desert, where he could be guarded by the Frontier Force. See files in FO 371/31570. He would eventually return to Egyptian politics and the premiership after the war.

65 Lampson to FO, 28 April 1941, FO 371/27430.

66 Lampson to FO, 14 Nov. 1941, FO 371/27434 and Lampson to FO, 4 May 1941, FO 371/27430.

convinced that nothing short of firm and resolute action against the principal offenders will put a stop to it."[68] Given the external situation, it was worth the risk of having to impose British martial law and dissolving Parliament to keep order in Egypt.

By the summer of 1941 the British were convinced of the need to bring the Wafd back to power as the only party that had real popular support in Egypt. The war in the Western Desert and the British experience in Iraq justified the risk of disturbing the status quo. The question was, on what issue should Britain take a stand? In January 1942 the King provoked a Cabinet crisis that the British felt was sufficiently important to challenge Farouk, leading ultimately to the events of 4 February 1942. This episode reflects the confluence of the events of the war with internal developments in Egypt to push Britain beyond its status quo policy, while also leading it to pull back at the last minute.[69]

On January 6, 1942 the Egyptian Government decided to sever relations with Vichy France, although it would not intern French citizens or sequester their property.[70]

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[67] Lampson to FO, 16 April 1941, FO 371/27429.

[68] FO to Lampson, 25 May 1941, FO 371/27430.

[69] There has been much debate among historians regarding the significance of the Abdin Palace Incident and the role of some of the key players. In the period after the release of the relevant British documents in the 1970s, two important articles on the subject appeared, both of which provide a useful overview of the Egyptian and British interpretations on the event up to that point. Warburg's main argument is that Nahas himself was the motivating force behind his return to power: "the idea of British intervention in Egypt's internal politics emanated in June 1941 from the Wafd and not from the British Embassy." [27] He traces this Wafd offensive to Smart's June 1941 conversations with Amin Osman, serving as Wafd-Embassy intermediary. Gabriel Warburg "Lampson's Ultimatum to Faruq, 4 February 1942," *Middle Eastern Studies* 11, 1 (Jan, 1975): 24-32. Charles Smith examines the events of 1942 within the context of the power relationships of the three-legged stool: "it undermined the bases for continued manipulation of palace and Wafd which the embassy had previously exploited by balancing one against the other within the triangular relationship." Smith, 454. Britain tended to lean towards the Palace rather than the Wafd in forming alliances within this system but after 1942 Britain "came to see the young king and his palace associates as a greater threat to their interests than the leader of the Wafd." Ibid., 455.

[70] Letter dated 6 Jan. 1941 from the Government of Egypt presented to Britain by the Egyptian Ambassador to Great Britain, FO 371/31553.

King Farouk was on vacation at the time, and on his return to Cairo he called for the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Salib Pasha Samy, to resign. The King charged that the decision to sever relations with Vichy had been taken without consulting him.[71]

While this event appeared at first to be a relatively normal development in Egyptian politics, Lampson saw the potential repercussions for Britain. There was a strong difference of opinion among British officials as to how to respond. Smart took the position that if Hassanein, the King's Chamberlain, was telling the truth, and the Prime Minister had acted without the King's formal approval, then they were in a weak position to challenge the King as Sirry had committed a serious political blunder. In this instance it was truly an internal affair and Britain should stay out of it. Lampson disagreed and viewed the conflict in terms of British prestige. The constitutional issue of whether or not Sirry could take this action without consulting the King was irrelevant to the British position:

> The long and the short of it remained quite clearly that an irresponsible young Monarch, either of set purpose or egged on by evil counsellors, had provoked a Cabinet crisis over a decision taken by the Egyptian Government in compliance with a request from the British Government. This seemed to me to justify up to the hilt my request to London for authority to demand the dismissal of those evil counsellors whom we knew at the Palace.[72]

From Lampson's perspective, this rather trivial procedural issue of the severing of

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[71] There was some debate as to whether the King had previously been consulted on this issue or not. One of the Embassy's secret contacts in the Palace, whom Lampson described as "as a rule reliable," reported that the King had approved the decision before leaving for the desert but that a Palace official had convinced the King that the declaration in his absence was part of a plot against him. The agent reported that this was part of a bigger plan on the King's part to provoke a crisis and force Sirry's government to fall and bring Ali Maher back to power. He suggested that "the palace is struck by its periodic case of malaria and it requires its habitual dose of quinine." Report by secret agent, 21 Jan. 1942, FO 141/837. This same agent later reported that Ali Maher was behind the Palace decision and was personally part of the plot to replace Sirry's government.

[72] Killearn Diaries, 22 Jan. 1942.

relations with Vichy was closely related to the anti-British sentiment in the Palace, fostered by the King's advisers. This provided a perfect opportunity to demand the dismissal not only of Abdel Wahab Talaat, whom the Embassy considered to be "Ali Maher's tool," but also all the Palace Italians.[73]

The Foreign Office, however, was not convinced that this development was a real danger to British interests. If the secret reports were correct and the King was trying to bring Ali Maher and his colleagues back to power, then they would need to intervene and perhaps replace Farouk. However, as Scrivener noted, "The criterion is the safety of our base in Egypt: it has not yet been endangered by the King's action."[74] The Foreign Office suggested that Lampson should focus on getting rid of the Palace Italians rather than being distracted by the Vichy issue.[75]

The situation grew more urgent on January 26, when Sirry announced that if the Minister for Foreign Affairs was not reinstated in office than he would resign himself. When asked if Britain would follow through if it confronted Farouk, Lampson responded with the refrain common to all of his showdowns with the King: he did not think "faced squarely with the gravity of the issue, King Farouk would be so misguided as to hold

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[73] Lampson to Eden, 20 Jan. 1942, FO 141/837.

[74] Minute by Scrivener, 22 Jan. 1942, FO 371/31566.

[75] In suggesting that Lampson focus on the Palace Italians rather than the Vichy issue, Peterson also gives an interesting critique of Lampson's dealings with the Egyptians that sheds light on the transmission of information between the Embassy and London: "In this present case my personal view is that Sir Miles Lampson's methods are wrong The practice of following each interview up with a telegram to London, which the Egyptians literally follow to the cable office and which, as they well know, gives them some days for further mischief is not the right one: and in Egypt of all countries a man on the spot who acts first and telegraphs later gains the great initial advantage that the Egyptians are themselves persuaded that he both knows the mind, and enjoys the confidence, of his own Government without any need for consultation." By focusing on the Vichy issue instead of the underlying objective of removing the Italians from the Palace, Lampson threatened to "produce a serious and intolerable crisis out of a relatively trivial happening." Minute by Peterson, 24 Jan. 1942, FO371/31566.

out."[76] Lampson firmly believed that, in the end, the King would always ultimately give in to British demands.

The crisis appeared to have resolved itself, with the King agreeing to allow the Minister to remain in office. Sirry agreed to this compromise, but the calm proved to be shortlived. On February 1 Sirry resigned as Prime Minister and told Lampson that Ali Maher was stirring up trouble and wanted to return to power. When Lampson asked Sirry who he thought should replace him he replied "Send for the Wafd." Lampson responded that he had been thinking the same thing.[77]

The Foreign Office was unsure of the wisdom of this move. Peterson wrote "if time, opportunity and the discretion which we must leave the Ambassador permit, I should myself like to see the situation rather differently handled."[78] His concerns become evident in a telegram he drafted for Eden. The Foreign Secretary informed Lampson that he had "the fullest discretion in dealing with the situation which I realise may move too fast to permit of a telegraphic interchange of views," but also clearly asked the Ambassador to get in direct contact with Nahas before Sirry's resignation was made public. London wanted Nahas's assurance on three issues: agreement with the treaty and support for Britain in war, that he would not support palace favorites, and that the King would offer some form of recognition for the outgoing Prime Minister.[79] Eden's request for a direct meeting between Lampson and Nahas reflects Peterson's long-standing concern that Lampson was too reliant on the use of intermediaries. Yet despite this clear

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[76] Lampson to FO, 26 Jan. 1942, FO 371/31566.
[77] Killearn Diaries, 1 Feb. 1942.
[78] Minute by Peterson, 2 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31566.
[79] Eden to Lampson, 2 Feb. 1942, FO 141/829.

directive, Lampson did not meet with Nahas personally until after the latter had been asked by the King to assume office, instead working through Amin Osman.

On February 2 Lampson met with Minister of State Lyttelton and the military chiefs. Lyttelton strongly agreed with Lampson in taking action, although the military chiefs were not as convinced: "It was obvious that as always our military Chiefs want to be 100% secure and ask for assurances which cannot possibly be given,-i.e. might there not be trouble in the country, etc., etc." That same day Lampson telegraphed London with his plan for dealing with Farouk, which was similar to his proposals during the crisis of 1940: if the King refused to call on Nahas to form a government, he would ask him to abdicate and put Prince Mohamed Aly on the throne. If he refused this, he would have him deposed and impose British martial law if necessary: "…I remain convinced…that we shall have no real peace here as long as King Farouk is on the throne and that the problem is one which we may have to tackle at any time."[80] Lampson met with Farouk that same day, and the King agreed to meet with Nahas.[81]

On February 3 Amin Osman reappeared on the scene and asked to meet with Lampson. The Ambassador reported that "I have purposely avoided seeing him during the past 3 months to prevent any foundation for rumours of intrigue with the Embassy.

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[80] Lampson to Eden, 2 Feb. 1942, FO 141/284. The Foreign Office agreed with this plan, going so far as to begin talks with the Canadian Government as the best place of exile for Farouk and his family, the rationale being that the royal family enjoyed winter sports. Peterson pointed out that they would need to justify this action by referring to Article 5 of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, which called on Egypt "not to adopt in foreign countries an attitude which is inconsistent with the alliance." They would then argue that the King broke this agreement by maintaining relations with Italy and by refusing to get rid of the Italians on the Palace staff. Peterson did, however, have reservations about Prince Mohamed Aly as the new king due to his age and lack of heirs, and suggested they form a Council of Regency instead. Minute by Peterson, 4 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31566.

[81] Lampson wanted to send Smart to discuss the situation with Hassanein, their most valuable contact in the Palace, but Smart was in bed with the flu, which meant that the Ambassador was without

Position is now entirely changed and he is once more particularly valuable as the Homme de Confiance of Nahas."[82] Amin Osman assured Lampson that "Nahas was perfectly prepared to play if I would back him…"[83] Lampson and Nahas then carried out an intricate round of negotiations through Amin Osman regarding the form of government that would be acceptable to Nahas. Even though the British preferred a coalition government that would include non-Wafd members, in the end they had to accept Nahas's demand for a purely Wafd government.[84]

On February 4 Lampson met with the Middle East War Council and they decided that the Ambassador should inform Hassanein that the King had until 6 p.m. to ask Nahas to form a government or Farouk "must accept the consequences." As of 5:45 Lampson had not received a reply, so he sent a telegram to the Foreign Office explaining his decision. He also noted in his diary that while he had been given "full discretion" in dealing with Farouk by Eden, "there is no specific sanction to abdication or deposition," but they had decided to proceed with the plan if needed. At 6:15 pm Hassanein returned with a message from the King that after receiving Lampson's message Farouk had summoned the leaders of all the political parties, including Nahas, to meet with him, and they had all agreed that the British ultimatum infringed the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. Those present at the meeting had signed a resolution to this effect, including Nahas.

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ready access to his main political adviser at the Embassy during the most serious crisis of his tenure in Egypt! Killearn Diaries, 2 Feb. 1942.

82 Lampson to FO, 3 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31566.

83 Killearn Diaries, 3 Feb. 1942.

84 For the details of these negotiations, see Lampson to FO, 3 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31566 and Killearn Diaries, 3 Feb. 1942.

Lampson told Hassanein that he would visit the Palace at 9:00 pm.[85]

The War Council had decided that the issue was past repairing, and Farouk must be forced to abdicate. Lampson was determined to follow through with this threat but during a dinner with Lyttelton and his wife before proceeding to the Palace, the Minister of State changed Lampson's mind. Lyttleton disliked the fact that Nahas had signed the petition at the Palace protesting the British ultimatum and pointed out that it would look bad if they ended up "throwing the boy out for giving us at 9 p.m. the answer which we should have welcomed at 6 p.m." Perhaps most importantly, Lyttelton was concerned about drawing the military into the situation unless absolutely necessary: "it was up to us, the civilian side, to prevent if we reasonably could the possibility of embarrassment of a grave kind in the country which might conceivably occur if the King were removed."[86] Lampson admitted that he also had been concerned before the meeting about the idea of forcing the King's abdication even if they got what they wanted past the deadline. Lampson recorded in his diary that given this dinner discussion, "I made up my mind then and there that if the King caved in I should be wrong, taking the long and wise view, not to agree." This was a significant concession on Lampson's part so close to the final showdown at the Palace, and a decision that Lampson would soon regret.

Lyttelton's concern about military commitments was well-founded. During the early weeks of 1942, the war in the Western Desert was not going well for the Allies. Germany was advancing in Cyrenaica, and the news that Britain was sending

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85 Ibid., 4 Feb. 1942.
86 Ibid.

reinforcements from Egypt to the Far East caused local concern.[87] Despite the reinforcements Malaya fell, and just days after the crisis in Egypt was resolved, Singapore fell on February 15. At the same time the Embassy received reports that the Palace was not only organizing protests at al-Azhar in an attempt to show the Axis forces that they were anti-British, but they were also in "daily reliable contact" with Germany. Cairo erupted into public demonstrations in the early weeks of 1942, taking advantage of Britain's preoccupation with events in the Western Desert. Thousands took part in these pro-Axis demonstrations, with participants shouting slogans in support of Rommel's advance.[88] These developments demonstrated that the situation in the Western Desert was having a direct effect on local political developments in Egypt.[89] While the military was committed in February to backing up Lampson and enforcing British martial law if necessary, it would have been a real strain on military resources.

Lampson recorded his visit to the King in great detail. He arrived at the Palace accompanied by General Stone. Lampson's report emphasizes the show of force made by the British military: they were joined by "an impressive array of specially picked stalwart military officers armed to the teeth. On the way, we passed through lines of military transport looming up, through the darkened streets on their way to take up their positions round the Palace…Whilst we waited upstairs I could hear the rumble of tanks and armoured cars, taking up their positions round the Palace." Once Lampson was admitted to see the King, he "went straight to business" and confronted Farouk on his response to the British ultimatum. Lampson read out loud "with full emphasis and increasing anger"

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87 Weekly Political Report, Cairo, 4 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31567.

88 Artemis Cooper, *Cairo in the War 1939-1945*, 167.

his prepared statement, which concluded that Farouk was "no longer fit to occupy the throne" due to his breach of Article 5 of the treaty, for provoking a Cabinet crisis, and for refusing "to entrust Government to the leading political party which by commanding general support of the country is thus alone in a position to ensure the continued execution of the treaty in the spirit of friendship in which it was conceived."[90]

After reading the statement Lampson presented him with the letter of abdication.[91] Lampson then noted that "King Farouk hesitated for a space and would I believe have signed the letter had not Hassanein intervened in Arabic." Farouk, who Lampson described as "completely cowed," then asked "pathetically and with none of his previous bravado" for another chance, and agreed to summon Nahas and ask him to form a government. Lampson and General Stone then left, passing by the Court Chamberlains who were "a crowd of scared hens. The same in the entrance hall below where a vista at the entrance of grim armed British soldiers in their steel helmets with their rifles and tommy guns at the ready did nothing to allay their alarm." Lampson complemented the "efficiency of the military arrangements which could not have been better or more business-like. They worked without a hitch."[92]

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89 Memorandum by Grafftey-Smith, 12 Feb. 1942, FO 141/829.

90 Lampson to FO, 5 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31567.

91 In an interesting twist of historical fate, the letter of abdication presented to Farouk was drafted by Walter Monckton who had also drafted Edward the VIII's letter of abdication. Monckton was working in the Minister of State's office at the time. Killearn Diaries, 17 July 1942.

92 Lampson to FO, 5 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31567. The account of these events published in the pro-Palace newspaper *Akhbar al Yom* in 1945, after the lifting of press censorship allowed for public debate of this episode, serves as a useful contrast to Lampson's account. Abdin Palace was "was blockaded by thousands of British troops in field attire. A British tank advanced, smashed the Royal gate and entered the courtyard of the Palace…The gate of the Palace was left smashed as it is and H.M. ordered that it should remain so, throughout the regime of Nahas Pasha as a testimony of this aggression...all this happened at 9 p.m. in pitch darkness because crimes are usually committed in the dark…At the same time British troops attacked the guards of Abdin Palace, disarmed them, and blockaded the Royal barracks. One of the

Later that evening Farouk sent Nahas to the Embassy to meet with Lampson, the first face-to-face meeting they had had during the whole crisis. Having intervened actively to get Nahas in power, Lampson now told him that "I should once more relapse into the background until Nahas had formed his Government when we must have a business talk…I emphasised that my desire was, as ever, to remain as much as possible behind the scenes and let him carry out the necessary measures on his own."[93]

Lampson concluded his description of events for the Foreign Office by confessing that he "could not have more enjoyed" his confrontation with Farouk and thanking Eden for giving him "wide discretion" in dealing with the King. He explained why he did not press Farouk's abdication, despite finding the prospect "sorely tempting." He repeated many of the arguments Lyttelton had made against this action, elaborating on the need for civilian authorities to "avoid any major embarrassment for our military commanders."[94] What is striking about this report, the official British review of events, is the contrast presented between the British troops, daunting, professional, menacing, and the Palace staff acting like "a crowd of scared hens," and Farouk "pathetically" giving in to Lampson's demands. Lampson was clearly trying to project power and prestige, as contrasted with what he saw as Egyptian weakness and cowardice.

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guardsmen wanted to resist force by force, but British troops overwhelmed him and the guardsman's hand was broken….Meanwhile the British troops surrounded all the barracks of the Egyptian army directing their guns to them. British aircraft were ready to blow up all the Egyptian army barracks if it resisted. The British troops surrounded also the police stations and cut all telephone lines with the Royal Palace…All this to prevent the people from knowing what was going on in the Palace of the King." English translation of "Text of the British ultimatum to the King—momentous secret published for the first time," *Akhbar al Yom*, 17 Nov. 1945, FO 371/45929.

93 Lampson to FO, 5 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31567.

94 Ibid.

While Lampson considered the events of February 4th to be "a complete victory," Peterson at the Foreign Office had serious doubts.[95] He was particularly concerned that Lampson did not directly meet with Nahas beforehand to get his personal agreement to the three British demands. Reflecting his ongoing concern with Lampson's reliance on intermediaries, Peterson commented on the implications:

> As a result not only is it open to Nahas publicly to deny (and he will certainly deny it) that he either owes anything to our support or is under any obligation towards us, but we really have nothing to flourish, even privately, in his face when the next crisis arises. I do not regard the various messages which have passed between Sir Miles Lampson and Amin Osman as in any way a satisfactory substitute for a personal interview between the Ambassador and the Wafdist leader, since such messages entrusted to such a channel may quite well not have been delivered, or at least delivered in a form entirely different from that in which they were sent…[96]

Peterson predicted that within three months Eden would be wondering, "'Why on earth didn't we do anything except put the Wafd into Office?'"[97]

Lampson began having his own doubts the day after his confrontation with Farouk. Yet his concern was not with the fact that he had not met personally with Nahas beforehand, but that he did not follow through with abdication. Britain's action had further alienated the King, and while they got a Wafd government as they demanded, "we are still faced with the fact that we have a rotter on the Throne and that if things go badly with us he will always be liable to stab us in the back." Yet he consoled himself by

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95 Ibid.

96 Minute by Peterson, 5 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31567.

97 Ibid. Not everyone in London agreed with Peterson, however. Churchill approved of Lampson's style of diplomacy, in December 1942 asking the Ambassador if he would like to be considered for the position of Viceroy of India. Killearn Diaries, 2 Dec. 1942. Lampson was elevated to the peerage in January 1943, taking the title Lord Killearn. This title was seen in Egypt as a sign of the British Government's approval of Lampson's handling of the Abdin Palace crisis. Lampson noted that this honor "has strengthened the Embassy position and discredited the suggestion by anti-British elements of disagreement on policy between London and Cairo." Lampson to FO, 9 Jan. 1943, FO371/35528.

reverting to the classic British model of Egyptian politics, the three-legged stool. By knocking out one of the legs, as would have happened if they deposed Farouk, "the stool automatically becomes unstable and out of equilibrium." While it might have been desirable to replace Farouk with a more cooperative ruler in the short-run, Lampson acknowledged that it was useful to have the Palace available to act as a check on Nahas and the Wafd if they got out of hand. If they deposed Farouk they would lose this card in their pocket.[98] In essence, Lampson justified stopping short of the original plan of deposing Farouk by turning to the British policy of maintaining the status quo: upsetting the balance of the three-legged stool would have led to more unrest and uncertainty in Egypt than the British were willing to risk.

While the crowds of Cairo could not have helped seeing the British troops and tanks outside Abdin palace on February 4, the King asked British officials to keep the truth of what happened during Lampson's visit, particularly the threat of abdication, a secret.[99] Lampson complied, and it was only much later in the war that the truth became public in Egypt, causing a great uproar. It was generally known that the British had used force to return the Wafd to power, but not that Lampson had threatened abdication or the deeper issues underlying the demand. Shone observed that as far as most Egyptians were concerned, the British had used force solely to return the Wafd to power: "This has obvious disadvantages both for us and the Wafd; many Egyptians are asking why we took such strong measures for this end,-as they believe it to have been; and the tendency is for

98 Killearn Diaries, 5 Feb. 1942.

99 Lampson kept the truth a secret, but he was greatly angered when he learned that radio broadcasts from Rome described the events of February 4 in great detail, in a way that only someone close

our enemies and the Wafd's enemies to join forces and to rally around the King" even though they were unsure why such drastic measures were taken.[100] Shone's concerns were well-founded. Egyptian historian Muhamed Anis explained in his assessment of the Abdin Palace incident that Nahas's cooperation with Britain discredited the Wafd party's leadership of the nationalist movement. The Palace moved in to replace it as the symbol of the nationalist movement in the eyes of much of the Egyptian middle class and army, a situation which remained until 1946.[101]

Egyptians made their disapproval known through a social boycott of the British community. The King, on his first meeting with Lampson after February 4, publicly snubbed the Ambassador in front of a large crowd gathered to welcome the Empress of Tehran at the airport. Lampson, with his keen sense of protocol and the need to maintain British prestige, was extremely angry and demanded a formal apology.[102] The Egyptian military officers were also upset by the events of February 4, as the King was the official head of the Egyptian Army and this was seen as a personal slight to him. The officers cancelled a scheduled reception for General Stone in protest. Two British agents reported on the anger of the officers at an Officers Club meeting on February 7: "There was considerable feeling against Nahas Pasha for having accepted to form the new Ministry and above all because he was aware of British demands which were made to the King and which could only be regarded as threats. The Officers declared that in the future there

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to the proceedings could do. They traced the leakage back to a secret transmitter in the Palace. Eden to Lampson, 13 March 1942, FO 141/837.

[100] Minute by Shone, 5 Feb. 1942, FO 141/829.

[101] Anis, Mohamed. *Arba'ah Fabrayir 1942 fi ta'rikh Misr al-siyasi* [February 4, 1942 in the Political History of Egypt] (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyah lil-Dirasat wa-al-Nashr, 1972), 7.

[102] Lampson to FO, 19 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31568.

would be no co-operation between themselves and the British."[103] Protests also came from another area when 1,000 Egyptian women signed a petition that was presented to Lampson protesting British action against the King. The signatories included the wives of many Egyptian politicians and Huda Sharawi, a prominent Egyptian feminist who the British considered to be "one of our most persistent enemies for years."[104]

The opposition parties expressed their anger as well. In a political pamphlet Ahmed Maher, President of the Chamber of Deputies, argued that Britain's action in Egypt contradicted British claims to be fighting the for democracy: "I regret that such aggression and such unjustifiable intervention in our real internal affairs should take place at a time when Britain is defending the cause of democracy and the liberties of nations in a war which in relation to herself is a war of life or death."[105] Lampson tried to limit the damage by speaking to Hassanein, who had been present at Lampson's audience with the King on February 4, and taking the Palace to task for allowing the idea of "the Wafd having been imposed by British bayonets" to circulate and not putting a stop to it: "As Pasha was present at the interview, he knew full well that was a distortion of the facts: British bayonets had been present for quite another purpose which we on our side had loyally not disclosed."[106] British officials seemed to think that if the underlying issue of the Palace Italians and the threat of abdication were made public the Egyptian public would be more understanding of Britain's methods.

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103 Jenkins of Defence Security Office to Tomlyn, 9 Feb. 1942, FO 141/841.

104 Lampson to FO, 4 May 1942, FO 371/31571.

105 Translation of letter from Ahmed Maher, President of the Chamber of Deputies, to Lampson, 5 Feb. 1942, FO 141/829.

Had the ultimatum to the king achieved what Britain had hoped? Lampson observed after his first meeting with Nahas that he was "not particularly impressed." One of his friends told him that "...whereas in the past I had only to spend 12 hours a day watching the Palace, it would in future be question [sic] of 24 hours a day watching not only the Palace but the Wafd!"[107] Smart offered a gloomy prognosis. The Embassy continued to have trouble with the Palace, and "It is obvious that the King has in no way changed his attitude…He has no intention of co-operating with the Wafd beyond what he is forced to do…There are all the makings of a first-class row between the Wafd government and the Palace, which will either involve the exit of the Government or our forceful intervention."[108] All of the opposition parties, even if they had not been pro-Palace before, would move to support the King against a government seen to be a British tool: "The Wafd will make every possible gaffe as in the past, will disgruntle senior officials if it does not actually sack them, will make all the intellectual and better social elements feel that they are to be left in the wilderness and will before long create against itself the influential opposition which in the past has been able to overthrow it with the help of the monarch."[109] Even though the British bypassed the normal cycle of Egyptian governments in supporting a Wafd government, they had still not broken the cycle, and Smart expected it to continue as before.

The real events of February 4th were not publicly revealed until the lifting of

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106 Lampson to FO, 10 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31567.
107 Killearn Diaries, 10 Feb. 1942.
108 Memorandum by Smart, 25 March 1942, FO 141/837.
109 Memorandum by Smart, 8 Feb. 1942, FO 141/829.

press censorship after World War II. On November 13, 1945, "National Struggle Day," Nahas used the occasion to make a speech attacking the government in power and defending his own actions during the Abdin Palace Incident. The speech set off a barrage of articles in the Egyptian press either defending or attacking Nahas's role in these proceedings, and the resulting debate reveals the deep impression that this event had on the Egyptian public. Nahas blamed the events of February 4th on the "coup d'état" governments that ruled Egypt after 1938, describing them as "reactionaries" with Axis ties.[110] He denied having any role in the planning leading up to the confrontation at the Palace. He only learned of Britain's ultimatum after Farouk called him back from Luxor on February 2 for a conference. Nahas emphasized the steps he took after accepting office that "removed the effect of the British ultimatum," namely issuing protests to both the Ambassador and the Minister of State. After giving his account, Nahas declared that this was a true account and "There was nothing in it which would make him blush."[111]

Many of these articles focused on what transpired in the meeting that Farouk held with Egyptian political leaders at the Palace before Ambassador Lampson's arrival. Nahas portrayed his acceptance of the premiership as "evidence of his manly conduct, patriotism, and extreme loyalty to the Throne and country," rather than a betrayal of the Egyptian nationalist cause.[112] As one supporter and eye-witness recalled, Nahas accepted

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110 English translation of article appearing in *al Misri*, 21 Nov. 1945, FO371/45929.

111 "Nahas Pasha says 'no reason to blush over Feb. 4,'" article in the *Egyptian Gazette*, 14 Nov. 1945, FO371/45929. The *Egyptian Gazette* was an English-language newspaper that was effectively requisitioned by the British military and civilian authorities during the war to serve as the British mouthpiece in the Egyptian press.

For the debate over whether or not Nahas was aware of British plans in advance, see Smith, 470-471, especially ff 55.

112 Ibid.

the position due to "his desire to avoid the serious consequences of his eventual refusal."[113] Not accepting would have given Britain a pretext for even greater interference in Egypt. The Saadist party leader, Ahmed Maher, questioned Nahas's willingness to go along with the British ultimatum, noting the irony of a Wafdist leader who had pushed for Egyptian independence now being put in office with British force. Ahmed Maher told Nahas that his acceptance of this plan signified "approval of foreign intervention…To accept the premiership under such circumstances means attaining it with the help of British bayonets."[114]

The traditionally pro-Palace newspaper *Akhbar al Yom* joined the debate by publishing for the first time the complete text of the British ultimatum to Farouk. After presenting a particularly colorful account of the showdown at Abdin, the paper noted that upon accepting the premiership Nahas, on the King's instruction, left the Palace to confer with Lampson: "H.E. went out of the patriotic King's Palace to the Palace of the Embassy which outraged the independence of the country." The editor of the paper, Mustapha Amin, attributed Britain's insistance on a Wafd government to a divide and rule policy: such an action would divide the political parties of Egypt and keep them from undermining Britain's plans. It would also make Nahas beholden to Britain as he would be "aware that he owes his existence to their tanks and that they are the source of his power. The intelligent British wanted to escape the consequences of Egypt's unity, so they did this master stroke." The editor argued that the events of February 4th were worse

113 Translation of "What Happened on February 4th, 1942," article published in *al Doustour*, 15 Nov. 1945, FO371/45929. This newspaper was considered to be the Saadist party organ.

114 Ibid.

than that other infamous episode in Anglo-Egyptian relations, the Dinshawai Incident.[115]

The events of February 4th provided a short-term solution to the challenges facing Britain in Egypt at a critical period in the war. The long-term impact on British relations with Egypt was decidedly negative, affecting post-war negotiations and contributing to the Egyptian revolution. Anwar al-Sadat, looking back on February 1942 from the perspective of the Free Officers who would lead the 1952 revolution, described it as "one of the crucial incidents in contemporary Egyptian history. The King lost face. Virtually a prisoner in his own palace, he played an obscure and insignificant role for the rest of the war."[116] The Egyptian officers met to discuss possible reprisals against Britain in response to this act, and ultimately decided that Egypt was not ready to fight, but this event nonetheless played a critical role in their growing opposition to British influence:

> Moderation won the day, but the hostility of the Egyptian Army resulted in the immobilization of considerable British forces, which Britain could more usefully have employed elsewhere…This latest affront to our country gave a new stimulus to the revolutionary movement. Abdul Nasser and Abdul Hakim Amer determined that Egypt must never again suffer such a humiliation. The real revolutionary conspiracy dates back to this time. The movement had now passed from the theoretic to the militant phase.[117]

In the Abdin Palace incident, Britain played its force card. Embassy and military authorities concluded that the use of force as an option was now closed, as the Egyptian

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115 English translation of "Text of the British ultimatum to the King—momentous secret published for the first time," *Akhbar al Yom*, 17 Nov. 1945, FO 371/45929. In June 1906 a group of British officers stopped in the Egyptian village of Dinshawai for a pigeon-shooting trip, and the wife of a local religious leader was shot. The British opened fire in the ensuing altercation with villagers and one of the officers died. The British response to this incident was particularly severe and came to represent the brutality of British imperial rule: 52 Egyptians were arrested, four sentenced to death and others to hard labor. P.J. Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt*, 4th ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 206.

116 Sadat, 44-45.

117 Ibid., 46.

army would be prepared for such action again and would respond militarily.[118] The element of surprise had been lost; the question was, had Britain gained enough in return to make it worthwhile?

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[118] Wright, Minutes of Embassy Meeting, 28 Feb. 1942, FO 141/837.

PART III: THE PRO-BRITISH GOVERNMENTS OF NURI AND NAHAS

Chapter 6: A "well-run" Iraq or a "happy" Iraq? The "Second British Occupation", 1941-1945[1]

Having replaced their "Public Enemy No. 1" in both Iraq and Egypt with friendly governments, British Embassy officials faced new challenges. They felt a certain obligation to ensure that these governments acted honestly and in the best interests of the people, because they had, after all, come to power with British assistance. Yet this ideal was often in conflict with their own aim of ensuring cooperation in wartime. How far should Britain go in standing by her friends in Egypt and Iraq? Was it better, as one official put it with respect to Iraq, to have a friendly but corrupt local government, or to have a well run but less cooperative administration? To resolve all of these issues, British officials felt compelled to intervene in local administration. Issues of "good governance" were not only important for the local populations, but they represented opportunities to strengthen Britain's position in each country and served as a cover for greater intervention. Yet this more visible British involvement also greatly curtailed the ability of both governments to act independently, as the British were now involved in internal affairs at a level unprecedented since the signing of the treaties of the 1930s. The

[1] Durra's use of the term "Second British Occupation" to describe Britain's presence in Iraq after 1941 is significant because it draws attention to the earlier occupation during World War I and the Mandate and reflects the way in which Iraqi historians have drawn comparisons between these two periods in Anglo-Iraqi relations. Mahmud al-Durra, *Al Harb al-Iraqiya al-Britaniya* [The Iraqi-British War], 7.

governments of Nuri as-Said and Mustafa Nahas actively cooperated with British officials and met their wartime demands, yet they lost much of their local credibility.

The British were not the only ones standing by their friends in Egypt and Iraq. The new Prime Ministers both had their own obligations to fulfill. The British supported Nahas partly because they firmly believed that his party represented the majority of the country, which would make it easier for him to institute wartime policies. Yet this also meant that he had his own circle of "friends" who needed to be rewarded with jobs, leading to accusations of corruption. Walter Smart, the Oriental Counsellor in Egypt, frequently compared Nahas's administration to the legendary Tammany Hall political machine of New York City, both with respect to its corruption and its mastery of patron-client relations as a means of exerting political influence.[2] The Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri, had built a career through strategic alliances within the Iraqi military and political establishment. He prided himself on supporting his friends even when it was not politically wise to do so.[3] The circles of patronage were not limited to the British, as local leaders had their own networks to maintain, further complicating the task of administrative reform. But while the British viewed their loyalty to their supporters as a virtue, in Nuri and Nahas they considered it a weakness.

Iraq faced serious internal disruption after the 1941 coup and subsequent British occupation. It had a pro-Allied but weak government, an army in disarray, the remnant of a fifth column organization that had lost its most visible leaders but still remained intact throughout the country, a Shia majority and Kurdish minority with long-standing

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2 Smart memorandum on the Wafd, 10 April 1946, FO141/1077.

3 Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 333-334.

grievances demanding greater participation in public life, and unstable borders with a growing Axis presence in both Syria and Iran.[4] Britain found itself shouldering a military occupation of Iraq and greater responsibility for internal administration, the very thing it had hoped to avoid by pursuing its status quo policy at the beginning of the war. Yet given the serious threats it saw to the region, from Axis troops moving across North Africa and through Eastern Europe, unrest in Syria and Axis infiltration of Iran, it was now considered to be worth the cost both in terms of troops and supplies.

Although the British exerted a powerful influence over the affairs of Iraq after the 1941, this did not mean that they always had the ability to impose their will. They were hampered by the larger realities of the war and the need for troops elsewhere, which necessitated holding Iraq with minimal British forces. In response to "murmured suggestions for 'firm action'" from the military authorities, G.H. Thompson, the Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy in Baghdad during the summer of 1943, issued a call for restraint that reveals the limitations the British faced:

> Anglo-Iraqi relations are a delicate growth. Even if it were desirable, there are no sanctions we could employ to secure quick action in such complex matters, while anything savouring of mere table-thumping could only lead to loss of goodwill and resultant deliberate and effective obstruction. In any event, as it is now evident to all that our local forces are reduced virtually to clerks, care-maintenance and labour formations, our military strength here and heavy commitments elsewhere would scarcely justify the sudden adoption of an aggressive policy over questions that are difficult and important, but scarcely vital.[5]

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[4] Although outside the scope of this study, developments in Syria and Iran played an important role in British considerations about Iraq's strategic value. See Geoffrey Warner, *Iraq and Syria 1941* and George Kirk, *The Middle East in the War*, Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946.

[5] Thompson to Eden, 26 July 1943, FO 371/35011.

In an interesting reversal of roles, Ambassador Lampson in Egypt at this same time was calling for a firm response to a crisis in Egypt and was being restrained by the military authorities. In both cases, Britain realized that even if desirable, a heavy-handed response was not always feasible given the limitations of wartime.

The Political Advisory System

In the aftermath of the 1941 coup, British officials both in London and in Baghdad engaged in a considerable amount of introspection, reflecting on the coup's causes, the buildup of animosity towards Britain, and why they had been unable to prevent it in the first place. They concluded that the weakness of their presence in the provinces before the coup had contributed to the situation. Britain had allowed its human intelligence networks to atrophy during the 1930s after the end of the Mandate. British military authorities and the British Embassy in Baghdad responded by establishing organizations to take advantage of their renewed authority in Iraq and to bolster their intelligence gathering capabilities. Britain's Ambassador to Iraq, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, looked back to the administrative structure of the Mandate period for inspiration and created the Political Advisory system.

Cornwallis recognized the great gaps in British intelligence in Iraq, particularly in outlying areas, and proposed creating an organization to allow him to follow developments in the provinces and maintain contact with local leaders:

> This aspect of our task appears to have been completely neglected in the past and Axis propaganda has been allowed to spread unhindered. The intensive work of four years cannot be successfully combatted in a few days but in my opinion it is not too late to remedy this serious state of affairs by the appointment of experienced political officers who know and have gained the friendship of the chief tribal leaders and the generous employment of money. Without a real effort of this kind which will at the same time strengthen the position of the present

> Government, we shall never succeed in securing a proper hold over public opinion in outlying districts.[6]

These Political Advisers (PAs) would have extensive experience in Iraq and their main responsibility would be to use their contacts with local leaders to "keep me [Cornwallis] informed of all developments and act as channels for disseminating policy of His Majesty's Government amongst civil authorities and population."[7] The PAs would also work closely with British and local military authorities, in particular British consulates and the Allied Liaison Officers who were responsible for military intelligence.[8] Having these men in place would allow the British to respond more quickly to any future crisis in Iraq.

The Political Advisor system reflected the importance the British placed on personal contacts as a means of influencing events in the Arab world. This belief was a

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6 Cornwallis to FO, 20 June 1941, FO 624/25.

7 Ibid.

8 On the military side, a Combined Intelligence Centre Iraq (CICI) was established, staffed by members of the British army and the Royal Air Force (RAF), as well as political advisers. Primarily created as an inter-service intelligence gathering organization, it was also instructed to work closely with the Embassy Publicity Section on propaganda and publicity throughout Iraq, to cooperate with the local MI6 representative, and to implement propaganda directives from the Jerusalem Bureau. Revised Charter for the Combined Intelligence Centre Iraq, 6 July 1941, FO 371/27078. The different functions of the Political Advisers (PA) and the Allied Liaison Officers (ALOs) of the RAF was highlighted in a memo to the ALO in Erbil, which advised him, if Kurdish leaders came to him with their problems, to instruct them to discuss their concerns with local Iraqi officials, or "in exceptional cases" with the local Political Adviser. The latter was to "be kept fully informed of all developments in the area concerned and no action should be taken which in any way conflicts with his policy." This directive emphasized that, just as the Embassy was responsible for the implementation of British policy in Iraq, the Political Advisers, as provincial extensions of the Embassy's authority, were responsible for the implementation of British policy outside of Baghdad. Wood to ALO Erbil, "Directive for Area L.O. Erbil," received in Embassy 11 Sept. 1944, FO 624/66.

The formation of the Political Advisory staff also affected the functions of the British consular officials in Basra and Mosul. While the consulate in Mosul was primarily involved in gathering political and economic intelligence for the Embassy, with the institution of the Political Advisory system this task fell to the new Political Adviser and the consulate focused on traditional consular duties. Finch, Consul Mosul to Stonehewer Bird, 7 July 1945, FO 624/83. Yet with the existence of overlapping organizations there could sometimes be tension, as when the British Consul in Mosul wrote to a member of the Political Advisory staff asking that he make sure that "the consul is not left out of things" during the impending visit

key assumption underlying British interactions with local officials and the implementation of official policy. Cornwallis envisioned the Political Advisers to be not only a new source of intelligence, but an extension of his own personal influence. When it was proposed that Cornwallis's Political Advisers should be placed under military authority, he responded that the PA system "…is based on the fact that I have long standing friendship with the chief Shaikhs in Iraq and that the officers…also have their friendship. Personal influence is, as you know of enormous importance in dealing with tribes and it is therefore essential that I should direct the scheme and that the political advisers should be under my orders."[9] This would allow the PAs to draw on Cornwallis's authority and reputation, built up through his long years of service in Iraq, to put weight behind their recommendations.

The Political Advisory staff fell directly under the Ambassador through the office of the Oriental Secretariat, and was divided into three regions: northern, central, and southern with headquarters at Kirkuk, Baghdad, and Basra respectively. The main duties

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of General Wilson, as this had happened before. J.P.G. Finch, British Consulate Mosul, to Kinch, undated. Kinch papers.

[9] Cornwallis to FO, 24 June 1941, FO 624/25. Cornwallis does agree that the Political Advisers will officially fall under CICI, the new military intelligence organization, but they would still "work under direct control of the Ambassador." ME Cairo to Cornwallis, 24 June 1941, FO 624/25. The Political Advisers worked closely with the military and were transferred to the Indian army on appointment as PAs. This transfer allowed the PAs to distance themselves from the Air Liaison Officers (ALOs) of the Royal Air Force (RAF), who were often viewed with suspicion in Iraq due to the RAF's longstanding presence in the country and its role in maintaining order in the provinces through the use of force. For example, the RAF played a key part in the first campaign against the Barzanis in 1932. British airpower destroyed Kurdish villages and led to high civilian casualties. David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, second edition (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 179. Given this history it is not surprising that one newly-appointed Assistant Political Adviser who had served as an ALO in the RAF informed Holt, the Oriental Counsellor, that he did not want to receive visitors until he was formally transferred out of the RAF "so that the odor of the A.L.O.'s office clings to me less strongly than it does at present." Dowson to Holt, 24 July 1941 and Cornwallis to Air Officer Commanding, Habbaniya, 30 July 1941, FO 624/25. For the RAF's role in northern Iraq, see Priya Satia, "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia," *American Historical Review* 111: 1 (February 2006): 16-51 and David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1990).

of the PAs were "to fight Nazi influence in all its forms in this country, to prevent the possibility of the recurrence of another rising against us and to make such preparations as are possible to meet a German advance."[10] Political Advisers should also work to support the Regent and Government of Iraq, cooperate with the propaganda efforts of the Embassy staff, and submit weekly political reports. The PAs would quite simply be a British presence in the provinces and undertake propaganda through personal contacts. As one official noted, they would be "most useful in 'showing the flag'"[11]

The Political Advisory system was, in many ways, a throwback to the days of the British Mandate in Iraq. The British Adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior, C.J. Edmonds, saw this connection: he observed that "Without going so far as to say, 'Scratch the Embassy and you will find the High Commission,'" most Iraqis remembered the days of Mandate rule and "even before the war the Embassy in Iraq could not be exactly like an ordinary diplomatic mission." This was particularly true for the period after 1941, as with the appointment of Political Advisors the Embassy "pushed its tentacles into the internal administrative machine even more deeply than the High Commission in its later days."[12] Edmonds described the Iraqi administrative structure under the Mandate as "a kind of diarchy" with the Iraqi King and the British High Commissioner at the top. This parallel structure was imitated in the provinces where, "at the elbow of each Governor" there were British Administrative Inspectors who were under the supervision of the

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[10] Cornwallis's directive entitled "The Political Advisory Staff," enclosed in Cornwallis to Aston, Lyon, and Dawson, 19 July 1941, FO 624/25.

[11] Tweedy quoted in a Minute by Caccia, 14 March 1942, FO 371/313349.

[12] Edmonds letter, undated (post 1941), Edmonds Papers.

British Adviser to the Minister of the Interior.[13] Cornwallis held this advisory position from 1921 until 1935, and it is unsurprising that he tried to recreate this structure while serving as Ambassador. Reinstating Administrative Inspectors under a different name provided the Ambassador with "eyes and ears" in the provinces, experienced men with personal contacts cultivated through years of work in Iraq, the kind of contacts Cornwallis himself most valued. Some of the new Political Advisers had even served as Administrative Inspectors in the 1920s and 30s, providing a continuity in personnel as well as structure.[14]

Cornwallis's first appointees as Political Advisers were Captain C.C. Aston and Wallace Lyon, who were Land Settlement Officers with extensive experience in Iraq.[15] Lyon was appointed to the North and Aston to the South, and they each had two Assistant Political Advisers.[16] This structure was continually readjusted throughout the war, with the appointment of additional PAs and Assistant PAs to meet new contingencies. Perhaps the best insight into the ethos of the Political Advisers comes in a letter that Lyon wrote

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13 "Some Thoughts on the Revolution in Iraq," undated post-1958 article by C.J.Edmonds, Edmonds Papers. The Administrative Inspectors were known as Political Officers prior to 1923. Fieldhouse explains their importance: "Although from 1923 technically only advisers to the mutasarrif and his council, the AI had very considerable powers because, in the last resort, he could call on support from the High Commissioner and the military or RAF. He could not be dismissed without the approval of the High Commissioner. Virtually no aspect of local affairs was outside his competence." D.K. Fieldhouse, Introduction to *Kurds, Arabs and Britons: The Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq 1918-44*, 27.

14For example Lyon held this position in Mosul from 1918 until 1932. Ibid., 28.

15 For Lyon's firsthand account of his experience as a Political Adviser see his memoir, ed. D.K. Fieldhouse, *Kurds, Arabs and Britons: The Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq 1918-44*, 219-228. The personal papers of Kinch, an Assistant PA, including a manuscript of his unpublished memoirs, are held at St. Antony's College, Oxford.

16 In a comment that reveals the Political Advisers' close ties to the British military and intelligence organizations, Lyon noted in his memoir that he also had three "specialists" seconded to train under him: "These were officers specially trained in the use of explosives who, in the event of the enemy driving over the Caucasus and occupying Iraq, would stay behind in command of guerrilla bands to disrupt their organization and lines of communication. While under my care they were to learn Kurdish and make

to Captain Wilson in June 1942, as the latter completed his training and prepared to take up his own post:

> Patience, politeness and tact should take precedence to might majesty dominion etc….Try and be accessible to all, abstain from partizanship [sic] in local squabbles and do not expose yourself to a gratuitous snub by getting involved in activities outside the scope of the Advisory Staff. Honour our friends, try and convert the waverers, assist the down-trodden and keep a wide open eye on the wicked.[17]

Lyon encouraged Wilson to travel widely and to study all aspects of local life, including customs, tribal movements, and agriculture. "The Army," he informed him, "will expect you to know everything and after the war the Iraqi Government will expect a high degree of native knowledge."[18]

The Political Advisers were also responsible for the disbursement of money to tribal leaders. These funds were used in various ways, as personal gifts to specific leaders, to fund projects such as the purchase of seed for a village, or special charitable donations, for example Christmas or Id gifts to communities. Communication with the Embassy was important in ensuring that the money was distributed evenly throughout the country. This close contact allowed the Embassy to identify individuals who were receiving funds from more than one Political Adviser or trying to collect payments from both the British and the Government of Iraq.[19] Bribes were also useful in cases where personal influence was not enough to gather information, although here the PAs reveal their prejudice in favor of the Iraqi elite: "Money should be spent freely though

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friends with the various tribal chiefs whose co-operation would be needed in the event of a British withdrawal." *Kurds, Arabs and Britons,* 219.

17 Lyon to Wilson, 27 June 1942, FO 624/27.

18 Ibid.

judiciously and secretly but it is personal influence which will count more than anything else with the most influential people. Amongst the lesser fry money will be a powerful weapon."[20]

Many of the tensions inherent in the relationship between officials in London and those "on the spot" were replicated in the Baghdad Embassy's own relations with the Political Advisers in the provinces. Just as London would often defer to the opinion of the local representative, so the Embassy recognized the Political Advisers' expertise and need for independent action. Cornwallis acknowledged this in his 1943 directive to the Political Advisers: "It is in the nature of your work that you have, on the whole, to act for yourselves in the way you judge best and it is on your own wisdom and discretion that I chiefly rely rather than on any guidance that I can give."[21] Yet there was always the danger that the PAs would "go native" and get too close to their local contacts, losing sight of British policy priorities, as the example of Mulla Mustafa's revolt will demonstrate.[22]

The Political Advisers faced a challenging task as they began work in 1941. They first needed to regain the confidence of the Iraqis after the Rashid Ali coup. Kinch, who was Assistant Political Adviser in Mosul, described the tension on both sides: "The Iraqis had lost face, an unforgivable thing for an oriental and it had to be lived down if we were to get co-operation. Our side looked upon them as traitorous allies while they heartily

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19 Weld-Forester, British Consulate Basra to Cornwallis, 9 Jan. 1942, FO 624/29 and Holt to Lyon, 9 Jan. 1942, FO 624/65.

20 Cornwallis's directive entitled "The Political Advisory Staff," enclosed in Cornwallis to Aston, Lyon, and Dawson, 19 July 1941, FO 624/25.

21 Cornwallis to Aston and Lyon, 8 June 1943, FO 371/35010.

22 The Mulla Mustafa revolt is the subject of Chapter 9.

wished for neutrality and the departure of British troops from the country." [23] Their task was made even more difficult by the fact that Britain was suffering serious losses in the war, and the British believed that wartime victories were the most effective form of propaganda. On a personal level, the PAs had their own resentments to overcome, such as the loss of possessions during the 1941 coup. Many of them had been interned during the revolt because they had held posts in the Iraqi provinces and were therefore unable to take refuge in the Embassy with the rest of the British community.[24] They worked under difficult conditions, with very little leave and an uncertain future. It is perhaps no surprise that Stewart Perowne, who became Oriental Secretary at the Embassy in 1944, described one of the Political Advisers as "a tired and perhaps rather embittered man."[25] The Political Advisers' resentment towards the Arab Iraqis after the 1941 coup intensified their commitment to the Kurds, who in general had not supported Rashid Ali and had taken a more pro-British stance. The inability or unwillingness of the British government to address Kurdish grievances despite this cooperation in 1941 led to further disillusionment on the part of the Political Advisers in the closing years of the war.

As the Axis threat receded, Cornwallis reassessed the role of the Political Advisers. He urged them to play a greater role in economic affairs, in particular controlling the distribution of crops crucial for the war effort. He also instructed them to work to improve local administration. In a typical display of paternalism, Cornwallis called on the Political Advisers to "help your Mutasarrifs" address administrative issues

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[23] Kinch, Manuscript memoirs, Kinch Papers.

[24] Kinch, for example, had his house pillaged. In his memoirs Lyon recounts his experience being interned during the coup. *Kurds, Arabs and Britons*, 214-218.

[25] Minute by Perowne, 17 Nov. 1944, FO 624/66.

"wisely and confidently." Assuming that the Middle East would be even more important to Britain's strategic plans after the war, it was vital for British officials to "cultivate friendly feelings towards Great Britain" among all Iraqis:

> We want the Iraqis to feel not only that a political alliance between Iraq and Great Britain is advantageous but also that British help and co-operation will be of solid value in every kind of legitimate national, and indeed individual, endeavour. In short we want to convince the greatest possible number of Iraqis, and especially the youth of the country, that they can best get what they want through our help and at the same time we have the task of persuading them to want what is best for them.[26]

This type of influence also brought responsibility with it, so he urged the PAs to encourage Iraqi officials to administer their country as efficiently and fairly as possible, "without infringing on the sovereignty and independence of the Iraqi State, the preservation of which is the basis of our policy." The Political Advisers should let comments calling for a return of British administration to pass unanswered, because the Iraqis must realize that now that they had their independence "they must live up to their responsibilities."[27]

Nuri as-Said's return to power, 1941-1944

The Regent chose Jamil Madfai as Prime Minister after his return to Iraq in May 1941. Madfai had previously served as Prime Minister after the 1936 coup and had a reputation for remaining politically neutral. Cornwallis was concerned about his ability to govern: "He seems to have grown slow and rather senile so may prove a broken reed but he was the only available candidate with any public support."[28] The new government faced the daunting task of reestablishing authority, counteracting Rashid Ali's pro-Axis

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[26] Cornwallis to Aston and Lyon, 8 June 1943, FO 371/35010.

[27] Ibid.

propaganda, and dealing with the Iraqi army, while at the same time avoiding the appearance of being too closely tied to Britain.[29]

The post-coup Madfai government in Iraq was pro-Allied, but the British were frustrated by its inefficiency and inability to deal effectively with the pro-Axis remnant. They deprecated Madfai's "business as usual" approach to politics and his apparent lack of recognition of how the situation in Iraq had changed in the post-coup environment. As Cornwallis explained:

> the Madfai Cabinet acted as though the events of May had been comparable to any of the other *coups d'État* by which one Government had succeeded another since the death of King Faisal I—one more lamentable episode over which it was charitable to draw a decent veil….Iraqi offenders,…were so tenderly handled as almost to give the impression that the Cabinet themselves lent belief to Rashid Ali's promise to be back shortly with a German army.[30]

British Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior C.J. Edmonds made similar observations, noting that Iraq after the coup was very different from Iraq before and that Madfai and the politicians needed to recognize that they had been part of the problem: "the old gang of Bagdad politicians…have lost all prestige in provincial eyes…as costly failures who have added the crime of treachery to their native misfortune of incompetence… he cannot carry on indefinitely as if nothing abnormal has happened at all."[31]

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[28] Cornwallis to FO, 2 June 1941, FO 371/27074.

[29] Cornwallis to FO, 5 June 1941, FO 371/27074.

[30] Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1941, 8 March 1942, FO 371/31371.

[31] Edmonds to Cornwallis, 12 July 1941, FO 624/60. Madfai's effectiveness was also hampered by personality conflicts with both Edmonds and Cornwallis. Edmonds noted that the Ambassador was "strangely prejudiced against Jamil [Madfai]." Edmonds Diaries, 7 Oct. 1941. When an Iraqi government official who often met with Edmonds on behalf of Madfai had his farewell meeting with the Advisor, Edmonds told him that part of the problem was that "I thought that Jamil had not kept in touch with Cornwallis enough, to explain his policy and how he was proposing to proceed. He complained that we British were not clear enough in our requirements; we didn't say what we regarded as essential etc." Edmonds notes that Madfai was not anti-British, but rather this was a personal difference. Edmonds Diaries, 8 Oct. 1941. Madfai's difficulties with Edmonds stemmed from Edmonds' longtime advocacy for

Despite these shortcomings, Ambassador Cornwallis saw no good alternative to a Madfai government. Instead he placed greater responsibility on the Embassy, employing the newly-created Political Advisery system and the expanded public relations section to win support. He also used his personal contacts, noting: "I myself spend several hours daily talking to Iraqis."[32] Cornwallis concluded that Iraq was not able to handle its own affairs, and needed the guiding hand of British advisers and the Embassy to address the challenges of the wartime environment.[33] Much of the Embassy's intervention in Iraqi affairs after 1941 therefore took the form of pressure for administrative reform and new faces in Iraqi politics.

Madfai's government resigned in October 1941 and former Prime Minister Nuri as-Said reemerged into Iraqi politics during this impasse.[34] While Nuri had always been willing to cooperate with the British, this could sometimes prove to be embarrassing, and British officials both in Baghdad and London hoped to keep him out of Iraq and out of power. Reflecting popular sentiment at the Foreign Office, Eden observed: "I hope that

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Kurdish interests. Edmonds noted that he and the Prime Minister had never got along well on a personal level: "he could never understand, and was therefore deeply suspicious of, my advocacy in the best interests of a united Iraq of a square deal for the Kurds, or for any element other than the privileged minority whose virtual monopoly of effective office is provoking the active resentment of the Shi'as today." Edmonds to Cornwallis, 2 Sept. 1941, FO 624/24.

[32] Cornwallis to FO, 25 July 1941, FO 371/27078.

[33] As Longrigg described it, Britain in Iraq after 1941 "was clearly dominant, had dominance been desired; but in fact it was more concerned to strengthen the hand of the 'Iraq Government than to supersede it." Cornwallis's role was "to link amicably the British military and the 'Iraqi civil worlds, and to offer objective and benevolent advice to the Government." Stephen Longrigg, *'Iraq, 1900 to 1950*, 301-302.

[34] In assessing Madfai's government, Longrigg noted that it did accomplish a number of things, such as the expulsion of the Italian Legation and the restoration of local administration but "the Ministry failed in a firm orientation of war policy, and notably in its half-hearted attitude to the known trouble-makers…The policy of the Cabinet was appeasement." Ibid., 303. The very characteristics that made Madfai an attractive Prime Minister: his political neutrality and opposition to a policy of persecution of his political opponents, ultimately made him ineffective in Britain's estimation in the post-coup environment.

we shall not allow Nuri to influence us-he always runs away in a crisis."[35] Yet when the Regent's first choice for Prime Minister proved unsuccessful in forming a cabinet, and when he then refused to offer the position to Cornwallis's choice, Madfai and Nuri were the only options left. Cornwallis unwillingly agreed to Nuri's return to power.[36]

Nuri quickly laid out a policy that addressed all of Britain's demands for cooperation under the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, including reorganization of the army, punishment and internment of pro-Axis Iraqis, the sectarian and ethnic make-up of the Cabinet, and a promise not to pursue Arab Confederation or a resolution of the Palestine and Syria issues until the end of the war. Cornwallis was pleased but skeptical of his ability to deliver on these promises: "If he fulfils half of his assurances the millennium will have arrived but they show at all events that his heart is at present in the right place."[37] Nuri did make great progress towards some of these goals, although he ultimately went back on his promise regarding Arab Confederation.[38]

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[35] Note penciled in by Eden, undated on Cornwallis to FO, 29 Sept. 1941, FO 371/27080. This debate between the Embassy and Foreign Office as to what to do with Nuri revealed that he had been receiving regular payments from Britain. Crosthwaite at the Foreign Office suggested that "it would be well worth our while to add a little to his allowances…to keep him quiet." The Foreign Office instructed the Embassy that if Nuri was given a post they "would be prepared to arrange for some addition to his emoluments." Minute by Crosthwaite, 9 June 1941 and FO to Baghdad, 10 June 1941, FO 371/27075.

[36] Ibrahim Kemal was the first choice. The British considered him to be an able official and the best candidate to run the government, as he promised Cornwallis that he would deal firmly with the army and Axis sympathizers. However the Ambassador was unsure as to whether he would be able to form a Cabinet because he had "a bad manner and is not personally popular." Cornwallis to FO, 29 Sept. 1941, FO 371/27080. Cornwallis's fears proved to be well founded: Ibrahim Kemal found it difficult to form a Cabinet as Nuri refused to serve under him and he refused to give in to Shia demands for four Cabinet seats. Cornwallis to FO, 28 Sept. 1941 and Cornwallis to FO, 1 Oct. 1941, FO 371/27080. Nuri's reasons for opposing Ibrahim Kemal as Prime Minister appear to have been partly personal, as they had not spoken in five years. Cornwallis supported Ali Jaudat but he refused the position. Cornwallis to FO, 8 Oct. 1941, FO 371/27081.

[37] Cornwallis to FO, 8 Oct. 1941, FO 371/27081.

[38] See chapter 10.

In order to address Britain's priority of punishing those who had participated in the Rashid Ali coup, Nuri agreed to their internment and a trial in absentia.[39] It proved to be more difficult to adequately address the pro-Axis sentiment of officials in the Iraqi schools and in the army.[40] The army had been purged after the coup but not disbanded because disbanding it would, as P.M. Crosthwaite, a Foreign Office official, pointed out, "…involve us in tearing up the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and reversing the whole policy that goes with it." Despite these serious concerns about the situation in Iraq, there was little that the British could do besides putting pressure on Nuri to continue to purge pro-Axis organizations. Crosthwaite concluded: "Admittedly we are faced with a choice of evils, but it seems to me that on the whole our wisest plan is to go on trying to win over as much as possible of the population: getting the worst of our enemies out of harm's way: and taking every possible precaution against treachery if the attack comes."[41] Given this approach, the Embassy's propaganda efforts took on added significance, and the Embassy poured additional resources into its publicity campaigns. By August 1942, Cornwallis called for cautious optimism about the political situation in Iraq despite bad news on the war front: "thanks in some measure to the work of our Public Relations Department, there is evidence that at last a belief in the rightness of the principles of democracy is beginning to grow...provided the enemy can be kept from her frontiers, Iraq will now stand true to her alliance to the end of the war."[42]

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[39] Cornwallis to Eden, 11 Nov. 1941, FO 371/27082 and Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1941, 8 March 1942, FO 371/31371.

[40] Cornwallis to Eden, 24 Jan. 1942, FO 371/31371.

[41] Minute by Crosthwaite, 16 March 1942, FO 371/31362.

[42] Cornwallis to Foreign Office, 2 August 1942, FO 371/31371. Sometimes British propaganda could be too effective. Thompson expressed his concern in November 1942 that Nuri in particular had

As part of their plan to revitalize Iraqi politics and administration and infuse new blood into the system, the British supported increased Shia and Kurdish participation in government. The War Office had made this part of their stated policy during the early days of the military intervention: "Although His Majesty's Government have no desire to infringe the independence of Iraq they are determined not to return to previous unsatisfactory system by which set of Baghdad politicians could run Iraq with no regard to the real interests of the country as a whole." To remedy this situation Britain would "view favourably larger Shiah representation in a national government to be set up as soon as circumstances permit."[43] Cornwallis made this a goal after the coup, reestablishing his personal contacts with leading Shias. Not only would this participation revitalize the political system, but it would also reward Shia leaders who had not supported the Rashid Ali coup: "we must not give the Shiahs the impression that we seek their support in time of trouble and ignore then when things go well."[44] This policy of increasing Shia representation was part of a larger plan to move political control out of the hands of Baghdad and to win the support of southern tribal leaders.

Nuri moved quickly to address this concern, including three Shias and two Kurds in his new Cabinet, including a Shia Minister of the Interior for the first time in Iraqi history. Yet the inclusion of more Shias in Iraq's government also opened the doors to sectarian divisions in the political realm. In October 1942 the government faced an

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taken positive reports of the progress of the war on the BBC broadcast, "which is listened to with avidity by the Prime Minister and others," to justify inactivity: "To some extent our own propaganda is to blame for recent growth of complacency here, for it has over-emphasised immediate possibilities of recent successes." Thompson to Foreign Office, 24 Nov. 1942, FO 371/31371. Cornwallis's optimistic reports were a conscious decision to balance what he considered to be the unduly alarmist reports of British military intelligence in Iraq.

43 War Office to C in C ME, 6 May 1941, FO 371/27068.

impending Cabinet crisis over a personal dispute based on sectarian differences between two ministers. The Foreign Office responded that while it was "most anxious" for greater Shia participation in government, in turn these ministers needed to "show discretion:" "Tendency to present a united front, regardless of the merits of the case, whenever one of them disagrees with policy pursued in some other Ministry, must lead to constant crises and seems to me calculated to discredit Shiah community as a whole."[45]

In the months after the coup both Kurdish and Shia leaders demanded greater participation in the political system. The Shia leader Saiyid Muhammad al Sadr, the President of the Senate, expressed the Shias' "deep feeling of dissatisfaction" with the Sunni's "virtual monopoly" of political offices, pointing out that these leaders did not even represent the majority of Sunnis, who were Kurds rather than Arabs, and were not the "true sons of the soil" but rather "inter-Arabian adventurers, mostly of foreign (that is Turkish) origin." Edmonds urged both Shias and Kurds to avoid making concrete demands but rather allowing the British to put pressure on the Iraqi Government to meet legitimate grievances:

> it would be a mistake to try to alter it at one stroke by way of memorials circulated for widespread signature, or other methods which might smack of agitation against the Government of the day; these would only serve to brace it to resistance; it would be better to trust to steady pressure, based on the logic of facts, aiming at the progressive removal of any genuine grievance one after another.[46]

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[44] Cornwallis to FO, 8 June 1941, FO 371/27075.

[45] FO to Baghdad, 1 Nov. 1942, FO 371/31371. The Shia Minister of Communications complained about the high number of Christian candidates for the teachers' college. The conflict between these two ministers over sectarian issues was so serious that it caused deadlock in the government, and the Foreign Office suggested to Thompson that Nuri should resolve the situation, preferably by replacing the two ministers (Abdul Mahdi and Tahsin Ali). Thompson to Foreign Office, 7 Nov. 1942 and Minute by Crosthwaite, 8 Nov. 1942, FO 371/31371.

[46] Edmonds to Cornwallis, 2 Sept. 1941, FO 624/60.

This exchange reveals both the continued sense that Iraq's rulers were outsiders with ties to the former Ottoman regime, and Britain's gradualist approach to addressing the grievances of the Shias and Kurds by applying pressure on the Iraqi government rather than through drastic action.[47]

The dedication of both the Embassy and the Government of Iraq to greater Shia representation waned as the war proceeded. The influence of the Shias Nuri's first post-coup cabinet was gradually undermined. By the December 1943 Cabinet, they had been given only three minor seats and more seats were added, further diluting their representation. Edmonds concluded that "There is thus a definitely sectarian aspect to the present political situation." [48]

Nuri made progress in removing pro-Axis elements from positions of influence and offered token concessions to the Shia community. Yet he did not follow through on his agreement not to raise the issue of Arab Federation and the status of Palestine and Syria during the war.[49] Cornwallis criticized the Prime Minister for being more concerned with grand schemes of Arab unity than with the mundane day-to-day administration of Iraq. Quick to act in an emergency, Nuri was "prone to relax among his dreams so soon as the emergency is over…'Il faut cultiver notre jardin' is not a political

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[47] When a young Shia told Edmonds that the British had set up the administrative system in Iraq in order to keep the Shias out of the government, Edmonds responded with what he called "my usual answer": that the British had replaced the Ottoman administration with an Iraqi Arab one and used any available officials. Since the Shias had traditionally not participated in government and state education, most of the available officials were Sunnis. He also noted that Faisal's men were "ex-Turkish officers" and therefore Sunnis. Edmonds Diary, 15 July 1942.

[48] Edmonds to Cornwallis, 14 March 1944, FO624/67.

[49] For Nuri's role in pan-Arab politics, see chapter 10.

philosophy which appeals to him…"[50] His frequent absences from Iraq, either for health reasons or to promote his pan-Arab agenda, concerned the Embassy because it left the government without its leader and encouraged intrigues.[51] British reports were also critical of Nuri's emphasis on personal politics, and portrayed him as being too blinded by his friends to notice their failings and too loyal to put them out of office even when it was in the country's best interest.[52] Yet despite all of his criticisms of Nuri's government, Cornwallis believed that he was an honest politician: "Nuri may be justifiably criticised for his subservience to vested interests, for his ignorance of detail, for his failure to grasp the economic nettle and for his tendency to indulge in high political dreaming, but he can scarcely be accused of corruption."[53]

The fault for poor administration also lay partly with the attitude of British officials, who had very little faith in Iraqi politicians, were disdainful of their motives, and were not afraid to voice their opinions. Cornwallis observed that the frequent Cabinet crises in Iraq "illustrated the inability of Iraqi public men to put their country, even in the hour of danger, before personal animosities, private gain, family ties, or sectarian

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[50] Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1942, 21 Feb. 1943, FO 371/35010. Britain had similar complaints against Nuri during his earlier administration from 1938-1940: "Nuri is, at the moment, too busy moulding the destinies of other people even to set his own house in order. His demands for advice and guidance of matters of local administration and policy are as exacting and child-like in their simplicity as his solutions of other peoples' problems are omnipotent, constructive, and inspired." They also deplored his tendency to act "as a somewhat junior member of his own Cabinet; he is inclined to adopt the old excuse…of 'nationalistic tendencies beyond my control'" to avoid making firm decisions. RAF Intelligence Summary, Iraq, March 1939, FO 371/23213.

[51] This was also a criticism during his absence from Iraq for the London Conference on Palestine in spring 1939, and again in 1943. Thompson to Minister of State, Cairo, 2 Aug. 1943, FO 371/35011.

[52] Cornwallis to Foreign Office, 16 March 1942, FO 371/31371.

[53] Cornwallis to General Wilson, 28 Dec. 1942, FO 371/35010. Not all British officials agreed. British military intelligence in Iraq described Nuri's government as "an oligarchy of racketeers." Security Intelligence Summary, CICI, Iraq, 21 Dec. 1942, FO371/35010.

interests."[54] Given these commonly-held views, it is no surprise that the British had difficulty working with the Iraqi administrations, even those who were openly pro-British, such as Nuri.

The government was also impeded by repeated cabinet shuffles. Frequent changes of government were a fact of political life in Baghdad. One Iraqi official described the political system as a "joywheel":

> Under the joywheel were always some fifteen or twenty ex-ministers waiting impatiently for it to stop; and if it happened that the wheel did stop and the eight ministers left their seats, then another eight of the waiting ex-ministers would at once hasten to jump on to the wheel and occupy the vacant seats. The wheel would then resume its cyclic movement, and the remaining ex-ministers, including the eight ministers who had just left their seats, would all co-operate for their mutual end, namely, to stop the joywheel again in order that each might have another chance.[55]

By 1944 Nuri had reorganized his cabinet nine times since coming to power in October 1941, but had not introduced new faces: "Having used and discarded twenty-four different colleagues, he seemed to be coming to the end of possible combinations."[56] The instability of the government and the frequent changes created conditions "in which it is impossible to do any serious administrative work."[57] The frequent changes also meant

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[54] Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1942, 21 Feb. 1943, FO 371/35010.

[55] Hikmat Suleiman in an interview with Rafael Butti which appeared in the Iraqi newspaper *al Bilad*, 15, 16, and 17 Dec., 1935. Quoted in Khadduri, *Independent Iraq*, 78.

[56] Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1944, 9 January 1944, FO371/45302. Despite their criticisms, the British did acknowledge the challenges facing Nuri in forming a viable government: "His problem, like everyone else's, is to compose a Cabinet of reasonably competent (and honest) men who will also be agreeable to the Regent, well disposed to ourselves and at the same time fit into the pattern of three Shiahs, two Kurds, a man for Defence and one for Finance, with which all Iraqi Cabinets have to conform." Cornwallis to Cadogan, 19 Feb. 1944, FO371/40041.

[57] Edmonds to Cornwallis, 14 March 1944, FO624/67. Edmonds, from his vantage point in the Ministry of the Interior, complained about the frequent change of governments to an Iraqi official: "Ministers came into the room next door, sat at the table for a while, and then went--to me it was like a march past of a column of troops; and I would help each (except in an extreme case) to the best of my

that ministers were rarely in office long enough to implement programs and reforms and see them through.[58]

By late 1943 the Embassy was growing increasingly frustrated by the lack of what it called "courageous leadership" in Iraq. Yet there seemed to be no suitable alternative from the British perspective: "There is a great dearth of material, for those who are able…are not reliable, while those who are reliable are either incompetent or insignificant."[59]The impending Parliamentary elections in 1943 raised again the issue of the closed nature of Iraqi politics and seemed to provide a perfect opportunity to remedy this situation. Nuri resisted British pressure to infuse the government with "new blood," arguing that it was difficult to find suitable new candidates with experience, and "he could scarcely be expected to sacrifice old friends in favour of new, untried and possibly hostile critics."[60] In the end, the elections resulted in only 20 new deputies, and while all the supporters of Rashid Ali had been eliminated from the government as a result of the elections, the Embassy concluded that the new Chamber was much like those that preceded it and would most likely vote in a similar manner.[61]

As the end of the war approached, the infusion of new blood into the Iraqi political system took on a new significance. It was not just a matter of improving

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ability as long as he stayed....I was tired of ministerial crises which obstructed the administration." Edmonds Diaries, 16 Jan. 1944.

58 Cornwallis to FO, 6 Jan. 1944, FO371/40041. Hikmat Suleiman would have agreed with Edmonds' critique of this system, explaining in 1935: "As this cycle continued it was obvious that the ministers in power would have no time left for work, but only time to defend themselves from the unrelenting assault of the ex-ministers. In the circumstances no constructive work could be done and this well explained why very little progress, if any, had been effect in Iraq." Interview with Hikmat Suleiman quoted in Khadduri, *Independent Iraq*, 78.

59 Minute by Chaplin, Foreign Office, 18 Oct. 1943, FO 371/35012.

60 Thompson to FO, 7 Sept. 1943, FO 371/35011.

61 Cornwallis to Eden, 12 Oct. 1943, FO 371/35012.

administration and addressing the grievances of Iraqis, but also of fighting communist influence. The Soviet Union opened a Legation in Baghdad in February 1944, and met a mixed response in Iraq. The "creeping shadow from the north" elicited paranoid fear on the part of Iraq's elite: "the fevered imagination of the privileged detects a bearded Bolshevik peering round every corner," partly due to the growing Soviet presence in Iran and fears of Soviet contacts with the Kurds.[62] Yet it also offered a new loci of political activity for those discontented with the stagnant political situation in Iraq. The British dismissed the influence of communism as a political ideology in Iraq. Rather, they believed Iraqis did not really understand the precepts of communism and were only attracted to it as a means of protest against both the government in power and British intervention. Cornwallis was representative of British officials in his dismissive attitude to communism in Iraq:

> The malcontents of the so-called intelligentsia have pretended in this country, as in others, to be attracted to Russian political ideas. There are probably less than a score of people in Iraq who have even the most superficial knowledge of the Russian political system, but 'communism' has become a cloak for any critical opinion, whether honestly or dishonestly held. Some old Nazi wolves, wearing Communists clothing, have already established themselves in the 'progressive' fold.[63]

This was merely the latest fashion in Iraqi protest movements.

British intervention in Iraqi administration: a friendly Iraq or a well-run Iraq?

British officials viewed the inefficiency and corruption of Iraqi politicians with alarm. The stagnant nature of Iraqi politics had repercussions not only for Iraq, but for

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62 Thompson to Bevin, 26 Sept. 1945, FO371/45295. The Regent, for example, "remarked gloomily that he expected the King would be dethroned in due course 'with all these Communists about.'" Cornwallis to FO, 4 March 1945, FO371/45329.

63 Cornwallis to Eden, Cornwallis's valedictory, 30 March 1945, FO371/45302.

Britain as well. Britain had a real short-term interest in supporting Nuri's government as that most willing to cooperate on war issues. At the same time, it also posed long-term threats to Britain's position in Iraq. As Albert Hourani observed, "the Government's inability to last a day without the approval of Great Britain" has meant that all problems were blamed on Britain. If Britain stepped back and allowed a "social revolution" to take place, a better government would probably come to power. Yet this would also pose serious short-term risks: "before it established itself there would be a period of instability, perhaps of disorder; and this is something which cannot be permitted in the middle of a world war. Nuri Said and his colleagues do promise a sort of stability, and that is the first essential of the moment."[64] One of the primary issues British officials faced during the "second occupation" was to define what their real goals were for the country. How much administrative control did they want to exert? Should they support the installation of real democratic regimes in the region? Once again short-term priorities won out.

While Iraq had a representative government on paper, most British officials conceded that in reality the system did not function as well as had been hoped. Glubb Pasha led the Arab Legion in Iraq during the 1941 coup, and in his report on those events he reflected on "the falseness and artificiality of the present political situation in Iraq." Britain had provided Iraq with "an exact copy of the British constitution down to the smallest details of an Upper and Lower house, a Speaker, and a Constitutional Monarch," in the expectation that this would provide the Iraqis with "all these blessings of democracy which the British people enjoy with such relish, and to retain which they are prepared to face death and ruin." Yet the result was far from democratic, as politicians

64 Hourani 1943 Report.

had hijacked the rhetoric and institutions of democracy for their own gain: "Thus, to the uninitiated observer, Iraq gave the impression of a model little democracy in action. In reality, a gang of political hacks were grinding out the same old tunes on the democratic barrel organ, while the men in the street, indifferent if not rather aggravated, by the discordant uproar, were occupied solely in making their livelihoods."[65] He concluded that "the Arabs were freer and more democratic before we presented them with a model of the British constitution."[66]

To what extent was Britain responsible for good administration in Iraq? This was a much-debated topic within the Embassy after 1941. British officials were divided between those who believed Britain should intervene more actively in ensuring good government for Iraq, and those who advocated a more limited approach. J. Chaplin, a Second Secretary at the Embassy in Baghdad, posed the question in a different way, namely whether it was in British interests to have a well-run Iraq, which would require greater British intervention, or a friendly Iraq: "In what proportions are (i) altruism (ii) imperialism (in the broad sense) (iii) economic motives responsible for the desire to see what may be called in short 'a well-run Iraq.'?" A well-run Iraq, "where all men are equal before the law, where officials serve the public and not their own interests, where economic resources are developed and trains run to time" would require greater British intervention in day-to-day administration, and such a country would not necessarily be

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65 Glubb, "A Report on the Role Played by the Arab Legion in connection with The Recent Operations in Iraq," 10 June 1941, FO 624/26. Lampson made a similar point about the trappings of democracy in Egypt in the form of "a constitutional regime of a most advanced kind" that in practice was appropriated for very non-democratic ends. Lampson to Halifax, 3 Feb. 1939, FO371/23304.

66 Glubb report, 10 June 1941, FO 624/26. Cornwallis was highly critical of Glubb's report, noting "with regard to Iraq, he cannot be other than a stale expert," but given Glubb's influence in the wider Arab world, his comments are significant. Cornwallis to MacMichael, 20 July 1941, FO 624/26.

pro-British, as it would resent this intrusion. [67] This official felt that Britain could run the country better than the Iraqis themselves, but this did not necessarily mean that "Iraq is going to be contented and we beloved…However antisocial it may be, the right of a country to go to the devil in its own way (more commonly known as 'independence') is a powerful fetish." More administrative interference might lead to a well-run Iraq but it "is a policy which will lead neither to a contented nor to a friendly Iraq" and would probably require the use of force.[68]

The dichotomy inherent in this "either-or" proposition is striking. The officials who participated in this debate overlooked the possibility of a compromise position. It is in this debate that the residual Mandate mentality among British officials in Iraq becomes most evident. The Embassy was, in essence, revisiting the post-World War I discussions regarding the nature and extent of British influence in Iraq.

Ambassador Cornwallis's own extensive experience in Iraq as Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior explains his preoccupation with internal Iraqi administrative issues. Cornwallis sent a letter to British officials in the provinces in April 1943 addressing the many visits they received from Iraqis complaining about inefficient government and calling for British intervention. These complaints, with the implication that Britain was responsible for the situation, "throw the British officer or official on the defensive and even…induce in him a quite unnecessary feeling of guilt for his country's alleged shortcomings." Cornwallis urged officials not to be "bamboozled" by these accusations about Britain's responsibility to maintain order in Iraq. The only way Britain

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[67] Minute by Chaplin, 25 Sept. 1941, FO 624/26.
[68] Ibid.

could do so would be to take over administration of the country, which would take away Iraqi independence. Instead, he placed the blame back on Iraqi shoulders: "The hard fact is that a people get the government they deserve and, conversely, a government usually gets the electorate it deserves." While the Iraqis complained about the situation in private they were unwilling to make these statements publicly or do the work necessary to improve the situation, and "Until they do so they will neither enjoy nor deserve a better government and it is well to rub this in."[69]

Cornwallis then laid out two main tasks for British officials: to maintain "friendly relations" with Iraq and to make sure that Iraq makes a "respectable contribution to the war effort." They should also lay the foundation for continued British influence in the post-war period. As for the argument that imposing a more just government on Iraq would help to assure continuing British influence, he warned that this may help, "but not to the point where our interference prejudices our relations with the Iraqi Government and thereby our essential aims." While suggesting that the Iraqi Government allow more British experts, officials could be forced on them, or they would be resented: "The Iraqis must themselves work out their own salvation. We can offer help but the days when we could force the acceptance of assistance in internal administration are gone…it is not our business to reform the world." Repeating arguments made after World War I with respect to the Mandate in Iraq, he noted that the British public would not allow the government to take over the administration of Iraq given the expense involved. British officials should try their best to use their influence to reform Iraqi administration, but not feel guilty for

[69] Minute by Cornwallis, 25 April 1943, FO371/35020.

failing to accomplish more. Cornwallis clearly felt that a friendly Iraq was more important to the British cause than a well administered Iraq.

Cornwallis held a marathon talk with Prime Minister Nuri in October, 1943 in which he addressed his concerns with Iraqi administration: the Government's failure to deal with economic issues and Kurdish unrest, as well as the "weakness and corruption" of the police, "unreliability" of the army, and "dishonesty and inefficiency" in public administration. Cornwallis offered a personal challenge to Nuri:

> By his persistent preoccupation over his dreams of 'haute politique', by his dislike of detail, and by his perhaps natural reluctance to offend powerful agricultural and mercantile vested interests, as well as by his tendency to let thorny domestic questions slide in the hope that something may turn up to solve them without any special or unpopular effort on his part, Nuri Pasha cannot escape blame for the existing state of affairs.[70]

The people of Iraq were changing, and no longer as "long-suffering" as they had been in the past. If the government did not adjust to the changes, particularly in urban areas, "the old order might be very rudely disturbed at no very distant date."[71]

The Foreign Office became increasingly worried about the situation in Iraq, particularly the lack of progress on tackling Iraq's internal problems, the army's inability to deal with Kurdish unrest, the problems with the Iraqi economy, and Nuri's ill-health. Cornwallis's report caused great concern at the Foreign Office, leading Cadogan, the Permanent Under Secretary of State, to write to the Ambassador in January 1944 asking outright: "Do you agree that Nuri is making a mess, and possibly a dangerous mess, of

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[70] Cornwallis to Eden, 6 Nov. 1943, FO 371/35013.

[71] Cornwallis reported on this four hour and twenty minute conversation at length to the Foreign Office and admitted that he had "not minced words." Cornwallis to Eden, 6 Nov. 1943, FO 371/35013.

the administration of Iraq," and if so, "...do you really regard the chances of improving matters by getting rid of Nuri as so hopeless that it is better to go on as we are?"[72]

Cornwallis's response, laying out his own philosophy of intervention in local politics, sheds light on this larger issue of administration reform. The Ambassador attributed the negative picture held by the Foreign Office to his reports which emphasized "my struggles to improve defects in the administration and not enough about the things that are going well." He admitted that he took a greater interest in internal administration than was necessary due to his "old association" with the country, particularly his work as an Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior. Cornwallis then laid out the parameters for British intervention in internal administration: "Our interest in that does not go beyond trying to ensure that it is not so ineffective as to be discreditable to our special association with the country and harmful to our economic, commercial and other interests." While he had been deeply concerned about the situation in Iraq at the end of 1943, particularly due to the unrest in the Kurdish areas, he praised their eventual response and cited it as

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[72] Cadogan to Cornwallis, 24 Jan. 1944, FO624/67. This bold question also led the Embassy to reconsider the way in which it reported on local events to the Foreign Office. Holt, the Oriental Counsellor, attributed this somewhat unprecedented correspondence from the Permanent Under Secretary of State, asking point blank if the situation was truly hopeless, to the style of Cornwallis's despatches to the Foreign Office and his relationship with Nuri. Most Ambassadors would not speak with a Head of State the way Cornwallis spoke to Nuri "except in circumstances of the utmost gravity and usually with the prior agreement of His Majesty's Government. Your talks with the Prime Minister are on a very different plane. They are much more 'Cornwallis to Nuri' as old friends than His Majesty's Ambassador to the Iraqi Prime Minister." When reported to the Foreign Office these frank discussions were misinterpreted. Holt suggested that, in future, "I think we should keep quiet about most of Y.E's heart to hearters and only report your more formal and official conversations, or at any rate tone down or discount a good deal the language which you 'hold.'" Minute by Holt, 27 Feb. 1944, FO624/67. Thompson, the Embassy Counsellor who viewed issues from a Foreign Office perspective, did not entirely agree, as "H.M.G. are entitled to be kept fully informed of the progress of events and of the action taken to influence them, and I know for a fact they don't like being left in the dark." Minute by Thompson, 17 Feb. 1944, FO624/67. Cornwallis took the middle road, agreeing that they needed to keep the Foreign Office well informed but also admitting that "we have piled it on too thick. The F.O. would perhaps be surprised if they knew that my first words to the P.M. the other night were 'Have you been Sacked?'" Minute by Cornwallis, undated [Feb. 1944], FO624/67.

evidence that the Iraqi Government "are willing to be guided by us when they get themselves into a mess."[73]

The British ultimately decided that a friendly Iraq was more valuable to them than a well-administered Iraq, and that they could not commit the personnel needed to administer the country themselves. This debate over good governance reveals the tension between British pragmatism and idealism. This tension is best reflected in the comments of Stewart Perowne, who replaced Holt as Oriental Secretary in 1944. While acknowledging that Britain's presence in Iraq was motivated by self interest, primarily communications with India and oil, he argued that protecting these interests "entails more responsibilities than privileges":

> It would probably be wrong to overlook the streak of idealism in the English character which, when it sees a mess, always wants to clear it up, but it would be hopeless to attempt to explain this to any foreigner, who would merely charge us with hypocrisy. It would also be difficult to explain that we want Iraq to be as free, efficient and friendly as possible. At the moment it is quite true that our position here does give us privileges, as for example, with contracts and public works. But anyone who has been here for any time at all, even for such a brief period as six months, must realise that, compared with the advantages, the responsibilities which we have to discharge are greater than in most colonies.[74]

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[73] Cornwallis to Cadogan, 19 Feb. 1944, FO371/40041. The Foreign Office was not convinced by Cornwallis's response. Peterson felt that the Ambassador was too optimistic and underestimated the "legitimate extent of our concern in internal administration." While not directly their area given Iraq's independence, "if the standard falls below a certain level consequences are bound to follow which will involve security, communications and all the rest of our imperial interests." Minute by Peterson, 10 March 1944, FO371/40041.

[74] Perowne made this comment in response to official statements that France hoped to hold a position in Syria comparable to that of Britain in Iraq. Perowne's attempt to show the difference between British and French approaches to imperial rule reflects common British assumptions about French administration. According to Perowne, French policy in North Africa and Syria was to suppress local Muslim communities: "Their object has been consistently to break that spirit by all means in their power…The whole of their record in Syria since 1920 has, I think, supported this policy of suppression." In Perowne's opinion, neither the Americans nor the French understood Britain's position in Iraq, and the fact that "in Syria the French have destroyed an Arab kingdom, whereas in Iraq we have created one." Therefore, British policy in Iraq should not be judged by the example of Syria, and the two should not be compared. Minute by Perowne, 29 Nov. 1944, FO624/37.

Cornwallis did not take his own advice to his staff to disengage themselves from interference in administrative affairs. As the war and the threat of invasion receded from the Middle East, the Ambassador grew increasingly preoccupied with issues of administration on both the provincial and national level. Effective administration was necessary to ensure that Iraq would meet Britain's wartime needs, particularly the supply of grain to neighboring countries facing shortages and the maintenance of Britain's lines of communication. By late 1943 the administrative problems in the north were growing so serious that Edmonds and Cornwallis were considering radical options. One proposal was to have the Political Advisers employed directly by the Iraqi Government under the Ministry of the Interior for a specified period with the goal of directly reforming local administration. Nuri agreed to this idea and was even willing to give the Political Advisers the power to suspend Iraqi officials if they deemed it necessary.[75] They would remain under the Ambassador's authority for their regular duties, and Edmonds would supervise their new administrative work.[76] The Foreign Office in London was alarmed at this "retrograde step," fearing that giving the advisers real executive power would lead to resentment among the Iraqis.[77] One Foreign Office official noted that this proposal, "even allowing for our heightened war prestige in Iraq, runs dead against our general policy in the Middle East, which is to achieve our ends by use of influence rather than the direct exercise of authority."[78]

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75 Edmonds to Cornwallis, 23 Dec. 1943, FO 624/34.

76 Cornwallis to FO, 30 Dec. 1943, FO 371/35013.

77 Memorandum by Chaplin, "The Situation in Iraq," 12 Jan. 1944, FO371/40041.

78 Minute by Peterson, 12 Jan. 1944, FO371/40041.

The implications of this plan were not lost to the Iraqis. Ibrahim Kemal, an Iraqi politician, complained to Edmonds that this proposal would "reimpose the Mandate."[79] This new administrative scheme was never implemented, but it reflects the persistence of the Mandate mentality among British officials in Iraq, in particular a growing conviction that smooth administration in Iraq required British supervision. The Ambassador argued: "There is at present a widespread realization that Iraq cannot hope to solve any of her politico-economic ills without expert foreign guidance."[80]

The Fall of Nuri as-Said's Government

Nuri reorganized his Cabinet once again in December 1943, but the "Christmas Cabinet" was poorly received by Iraqi officials and the public, to Britain's great disappointment. As Edmonds so colorfully described it:

> The birth was greeted, not with the usual signs of rejoicing, but with a chorus of cat-calls and abuse just as if yet another girl had been born to a family already overburdened with them instead of the boy everybody had been hoping for. Actually there was, as I shall show, nothing much wrong organically with the child, but parental neglect caused it to ail; a minor operation was performed on February 24th without any apparent improvement; it continued to suffer from periodic and alarming spasms until the evening of Thursday, March 9th when a slight improvement set in.[81]

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[79]Edmonds Diaries, 25 March 1944. The Political Advisers themselves were divided as to the benefits of the proposed change. Kinch felt that that it would have allowed them to have greater influence in the provinces. Lyon, however, was strongly opposed to the appointment of British Liaison Officers with political responsibilities, not only because this would infringe on Iraq's sovereignty, but also the Iraqis might pass the blame and responsibility for the situation on to these British officials, making their life "impossible." Kinch to Cornwallis, 12 May 1944 and Lyon to Oriental Secretary, 29 Aug. 1944, FO 624/66.

[80] Cornwallis to FO, 6 Jan. 1944, FO624/35.

[81] Edmonds to Cornwallis, 14 March 1944, FO624/67. One reason Nuri's "Christmas Cabinet" was unpopular was the fact that three members had been part of Taha al-Hashimi's Cabinet before the Rashid Ali coup. Cornwallis to Eden, 23 March 1944, FO 371/40041.

Edmonds noted that the current Cabinet "surpass any other group that I can think of; they are co-operating whole-heartedly, and as efficiently as the unfavourable conditions just described allow, with British policy."[82]

Nuri's government faced a number of internal challenges. Economically, Iraq was in trouble due to British military spending and the lack of imports and the resultant inflation. As one Foreign Office official explained, part of the reason why no solution had been reached was that "the Cabinet and their supporters, being drawn from the ranks of the propertied classes, are themselves among those who primarily stand to gain from inflation and are therefore lukewarm at best in combating it."[83] The Iraq army had been purged and was "almost entirely innocuous" but it had not really been reformed: "it remains an unwieldy and ineffective body, in which the principal qualification for command is personal loyalty to the Prime Minister."[84] Corruption and nepotism remained a serious problem both in Baghdad and in the provinces. [85]

Nuri also faced a new challenge from the Palace. The monarchy in Iraq did not play as active a role in politics as it did in Egypt and had not figured strongly in the Iraqi political equation after the death of King Feisal. The Regent, on his return to Iraq after the 1941 coup, tried to change this and began a renewed campaign to regain more control over Iraqi affairs. While the Regent was politically weak in some respects, Cornwallis believed that his political influence should not be overlooked: "It must always be borne in

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82 Edmonds to Cornwallis, 14 March 1944, FO624/67.

83 Memorandum by Chaplin, "The Situation in Iraq," 12 Jan. 1944, FO371/40041.

84 Ibid. This revolt is discussed in great detail in Chapter 9.

85 Chaplin observed that this was probably no worse than in other Middle Eastern countries, but a "higher standard" was required in Iraq because "the elements which comprise the country are more difficult to handle than those of, say, Egypt or the Levant States." Ibid.

mind that the Regent is far from being a mere figure-head. In fact, though not in theory, almost every appointment, every measure of administration, is subject to his personal wish."[86] The Regent was assisted in this campaign by a number of amendments to the Iraqi constitution passed in 1942 with the aim of redressing some of the weaknesses of the Iraqi political system that had become evident during the coup. In addition to provisions that made it more difficult for the Cabinet to dismiss the Chamber and allowed the Chamber and Senate to meet outside of Baghdad in cases of emergency, the amendments also gave the Regent, acting on behalf of the young king, the ability to dismiss the Prime Minister, a right that he had not possessed before.[87]

Nuri's government suffered from lack of support from the Regent. In March 1944 the Regent presented a document to Cornwallis in which he laid out the lines on which he expected the government to work in return for keeping Nuri's government in power. He called for the formation of political parties and for the King to be given more control over the army as a means of limiting political activity in the military.[88] Cornwallis felt this was a positive development, and that "It is a good sign that he should take an interest in such things."[89] Yet he seriously doubted whether this initiative would ever come to anything: "The formation of political parties is unlikely to make rapid progress in a country where personalities count for more than principles, and where the mass of the population are politically uneducated."[90] Despite his reservations that viable parties could be formed, Cornwallis informed Edmonds that "while I privately mistrust political parties in this

86 Cornwallis to Eden, Cornwallis's valedictory, 30 March 1945, FO371/45302.
87 Khadduri, *Independent Iraq*, 210-211.
88 Cornwallis to Eden, 14 March 1944, FO371/40041.
89 Minute by Cornwallis, 11 March 1944, FO624/67.

country because the Iraqis are so immature, I think they must and ought to come into being and my official policy is one of mild encouragement."[91] Political parties could be a means of bringing new figures into Iraqi politics, counter the Regent's growing interference in Iraqi politics and growing communist influence, as well as leading to a program of social reform.[92]

In March 1944 Edmonds predicted that the current administration "should be good for a year or more" and that it would be given a chance to perform.[93] In fact, it would only last three more months. Nuri resigned due the lack of support for his administration from the Regent. Some of the deputies in the Chamber had started calling themselves the Opposition and made public that they enjoyed the support of Palace officials.[94] Cornwallis did not encourage the Regent to keep Nuri's government in power "against his will."[95] Nuri's government fell in June 1944, and he was replaced as Prime Minister by Pachachi, "a rich landowner of indifferent health."[96] He was ill when he was appointed, and so the Palace formed the Cabinet and the new government "was everywhere known to be the Regent's handiwork."[97]

The new Pachachi government laid out a platform with three goals: to address supply issues in Iraq, improve internal security and order, and improve the efficiency of

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[90] Cornwallis to Eden, 9 Jan. 1945, FO371/45302.

[91] Minute by Cornwallis, undated [Dec. 1944], FO624/67.

[92] Edmonds to Cornwallis, 23 Dec. 1944, FO624/67.

[93] Edmonds to Cornwallis, 14 March 1944, FO624/67.

[94] Translation of letter from Nuri to the Regent, 24 May 1944, FO624/67.

[95] Cornwallis to FO, 26 May 1944, FO371/40042.

[96] Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1944, 9 Jan. 1944, FO371/45302.

[97] Ibid. The new administration now faced the problem of what to do with Nuri once he was out of power. The Embassy felt that it was best to get him out of the country, perhaps as Minister to London.

Iraqi government officials. Internal security and order faced two threats: the Mulla Mustafa uprising in the north, and the continued threat of pro-German propaganda and sabotage.[98] British military intelligence received reports of secret societies supporting Rashid Ali and committed to undermining Britain's position in Iraq.[99] As Thompson observed, "Such people blame Rashid Ali only for having failed," and he feared that the removal of wartime limitations on free speech would provide them with opportunities to renew their attacks on Britain.[100] A third member of the Golden Square who had masterminded the coup was hanged in august 1944, leaving only one still alive in exile in Turkey. At the same time, many of the Iraqis who had been interned in the aftermath of the Rashid Ali coup were being released from detention without, in the opinion of the British, having changed their anti-British views.[101] Britain's policy was to keep the internees they considered most dangerous "interned as long as possible," while keeping those who were released under police surveillance "to avoid the creation of a bloc of political 'martyrs,' which would certainly be exploited to our detriment once the war is over." Overall Cornwallis was satisfied with Iraqi cooperation on this point.[102]

Given the short-lived nature of Iraqi governments, Nuri's almost three-year term as Prime Minister from 1941-1944 was remarkable.[103] Having a cooperative Prime

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As Cornwallis noted: "Nuri when out of power is best out of Iraq." Minute by Cornwallis, 14 Oct. 1944, FO624/67.

98 The Mulla Mustafa revolt is discussed in Chapter 9.

99 Thompson to Eden, 14 Aug. 1944, FO371/40042.

100 Thompson to Eden, 24 Aug. 1944, FO371/40039.

101 Cornwallis to Eden, 31 Oct. 1944, FO371/40042.

102 Cornwallis to Eden, 9 Jan. 1945, FO371/45302.

103 Hourani noted three factors that helped the government stay in power. The first was the role of personalities: the government was dominated by a small group of officials with great political prestige and influence. The second was social: the government rested on the support of local elites, particularly

Minister in power during a crucial turning point in the Allied war effort during 1942-1943 was vital to Britain's interests in Iraq. Overall, the British admitted that Nuri's Government has met all their wartime requests "with a reasonably good grace" but had "proved themselves monumentally incompetent to set their own house in order." [104] The failure to deal with internal unrest and dissatisfaction with the status quo in Iraqi politics proved to be Nuri's undoing.

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landowners and tribal chiefs who occupied seats in the Chamber and Senate. And the third was foreign affairs "because whether out of conviction or interest they made themselves the spokesmen of the Pan-Arab movement," with Nuri being the most prominent example of this. Hourani 1943 Report.

[104] Memorandum by Chaplin, "The Situation in Iraq," 12 Jan. 1944, FO371/40041.

Chapter 7: "Let us stand by our friends": The Black Book Affair in Egypt, 1943

After the Abdin Palace Incident of February 1942 the British forced King Farouk to accept a Wafd government because they believed that only the Wafd, as the political party with the support of the majority of the country, could meet Britain's wartime demands. This assumption was put to the test soon after Mustafa al-Nahas took office. The summer of 1942, known as "the Flap," proved to be the most challenging period of the war for the British in Egypt. In June and July Rommel made his closest approach to Cairo and at times seemed sure to take the city. The British Ambassador, Sir Miles Lampson, publicly demonstrated British resolve to stay put in Cairo at the height of this crisis, and continued with his normal activities: shopping in the Mousky with his wife and dining at the Mohamed Aly Club, attending church services, and painting the fence outside the Embassy.[1] Yet this veneer of "business as usual" did little to relieve the seriousness of the situation. The Embassy and GHQ burned its archives, a sure sign that an invasion seemed imminent.[2] They made contingency plans to have King Farouk and the Egyptian government evacuated if the British were forced to leave Egypt.[3] The

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1 Killearn Diaries, 1 July and 5 July 1942. For a colorful account of "the Flap," see Artimis Cooper, 194-201.

2 Cooper notes that the burning of the archives became known as "Ash Wednesday" in Cairo, and the general public was aware of the situation: "The air was thick with smoke, and charred flakes of paper floated over Kasr el Aini like black snow. The heat of the fires blew some papers high into the air before they had been properly burnt; and, days later, peanut vendors were still making little cones out of half-charred and strictly classified information." Cooper, 195. While most of the files dating back to 1930 were destroyed, the ones that were saved were sent to Bombay for safekeeping. Killearn Diaries, 14 Nov. 1944.

3 Lampson told Farouk that one of two things would happen if Farouk remained in Egypt: either he would be forced into taking actions that "would prejudice his position when we returned, as return we undoubtedly would after a very short interval," or if he refused to cooperate with the Axis occupiers he would lose his throne. Lampson conversation with Amin Osman, 4 July 1942, FO 141/837/284.

Italians struck medals in anticipation of a victory in the Western Desert, Egyptian officers sympathetic to the Axis powers made overtures to Rommel, and there was a general air of fear and anticipation in both Cairo and Alexandria.[4]

The fears of the British and the hopes of pro-Axis Egyptians proved to be unfounded. The tide of the campaign in the Western Desert turned with the battle of al Alamein, and the ultimate Allied victory in North Africa in 1943 signaled a turning point in the Allied war effort. With the end of the North African campaign, the Middle East was removed from the frontlines of the war, but it continued to have strategic importance to the Allies. Britain continued to assert its influence in Egyptian internal affairs.

Although Lampson's ultimatum to Farouk and the imposition of a Wafd government in February 1942 proved destructive to Anglo-Egyptian relations in the long term, it did serve Britain's short-term wartime requirements by providing a local partner who was both willing to cooperate with Britain and strong enough to impose the necessary wartime measures. Nahas proved his worth as a British ally during "the Flap," and his actions demonstrated the value of having a friendly government in power during a difficult time. At the end of June 1942 Lampson noted that, despite British reverses in Libya, Egypt was generally friendly and there had been no public demonstrations, which he attributed to the "admirable and most courageous" attitude of the Wafd Government,

[4] Sadat's account of this period gives a sense of anti-British sentiment within the Egyptian army after the Abdin Palace incident. In July 1942, at the height of "the Flap," Sadat explains: "The plan of our revolutionary group was as follows. We would carry out a military *coup d'état* in Cairo, overthrow the Wafd government under Nahas Pasha, and put Aly Maher back in power. The Egyptian Army would harry the British forces. We would join up with the Axis troops, and the fate of the British Empire would be sealed. The Revolutionary Committee assigned to me the task of informing the Muslim Brotherhood about our plan." Sadat, 48.

including public statements by the Prime Minister.[5] Lampson felt a certain obligation to support Nahas in light of his actions during this challenging period. Yet Lampson also conceded that if the Wafd had been out of power, the result might have been the opposite: "A Wafd in opposition and disgruntled with us would, even if it had only remained apathetic, have left the field open to every sort of enemy manipulation of the Egyptian population." It was much better to have the Wafd in power, where they held responsibility, rather than out of power where they could cause trouble, and potentially turn the Egyptian masses against the Allies.[6]

Britain's loyalty to Nahas and the Wafd were soon put to the test. The 1943 Black Book Affair exposed the extent of Wafd corruption to the Egyptian public. Britain's support of Nahas would be tested throughout his term of office from February 1942-September 1944, due to these repeated charges of corruption, nepotism, and inefficiency. Yet both Lampson and Foreign Secretary Eden were adamant that they should "stand by our friends" in the face of these challenges. Britain had to decide whether to support a pro-British but corrupt and increasingly unpopular Egyptian government, or to allow it to fall from power and take the risk of a less cooperative government replacing it. British officials were forced to reassess their loyalties and priorities in Egypt, and reexamine the very nature of Britain's informal influence in the country. The resulting debates within the Embassy and with officials in London reveal the complexity of Britain's patron-client networks in Egypt during World War II, and the conflicting priorities of British officials in wartime. Britain's response to the Black Book Affair was not just a matter of practical

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5 Lampson to FO, 28 June 1942, FO 371/31573 and Lampson to FO, 29 June 1942, FO 371/31573.

politics, but also had a moral dimension that struck to the very heart of British officials' perception of Britain's imperial responsibilities.

In the eyes of the Egyptian public, the Wafd government had only been able to return to power by the strength of British bayonets. Sensitive to this perception, the Embassy's relations with the Government of Egypt after February 1942 were defined by the desire of both parties to avoid any overt signs of British influence over internal politics. Nahas was anxious to restore his nationalist credentials, burnished by his cooperation with Britain. The Ambassador wanted to avoid overt interference and sought to exert influence through back channels, while at the same time recognizing the need to support the Wafd government to avoid the appearance of deserting their friends. In reality, the Wafd period from 1942-1944 proved to be a time of renewed British intervention in Egyptian affairs. The delicate balancing act required to avoid at least the appearance if not the reality of British intervention determined the nature of contacts between these two legs of the Egyptian three-legged stool.

Nahas's return to power signaled Amin Osman's return to influence as the main intermediary between the Embassy and the Wafd, despite earlier concerns about his involvement in various political intrigues. Osman was offered a ministerial position but, on Lampson's advice, he declined it, preferring to serve as "Secretary-General to the Cabinet where he should be more influential and far more useful to us as immediate shadow to Nahas Pasha."[7] He was also appointed Auditor General in March 1942, but

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6 Lampson to FO, 28 Sept. 1942, FO 371/31574.

7 Lampson to FO, 7 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31567.

this title was "nothing but an official cloak for his real function, which is that of liaison officer between the Prime Minister and this Embassy. Nahas Pasha has in fact told me as much."[8] Having such an intermediary allowed Lampson to offer suggestions and make demands to the Government indirectly, without necessarily having the force to follow through, and it allowed Nahas to stay in close contact with the Embassy without publicly visiting Lampson. However, it also meant that discussions and negotiations went through a third party, leaving room for distortion. [9]

Not everyone was pleased with Amin Osman's return to power and Lampson's continued reliance on intermediaries. Maurice Peterson at the Foreign Office repeatedly minuted on Lampson's telegrams that he wished the Ambassador would speak to Nahas directly rather than working through Osman.[10] There was also opposition on the Egyptian side. Many Wafdists were angered by his return to influence, partly because they resented the British having contacts with someone so junior, rather than with senior administration officials. As Smart noted, using Amin Osman as an intermediary "naturally creates soreness among senior officials and leading political elements who do not regard Amin as sufficiently heavy weight to monopolise official contact with us." Amin Osman he was not familiar with the organizational side of the Wafd party and his poor relationship with

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8 Lampson to FO, 26 March 1942, FO 371/31570.

9 Nahas took advantage of this situation, at one point, after a difficult encounter with the King, sending a message to Lampson through Amin Osman: "Nahas Pasha wished it to be clearly understood that he was only informing me of his plans informally. He did not wish to speak to me direct about them so as to avoid any suspicion of [collusion]. He wished to place his troubles with the King on an Egyptian and not on a British ground." Lampson to FO, 21 March 1942, FO 371/31569.

10 See for example, Minute by Peterson, 26 March 1942, FO 371/31570. Peterson made similar criticisms with respect to Lampson's contacts with the Palace and the fact that he used Hassanein, the King's Chef du Cabinet, as an intermediary rather than meeting with the King directly. Minute by Peterson, 7 Oct. 1942, FO 371/31574.

Makram Ebeid, Nahas's main political adviser, skewed his perspective. [11]

In some respects Hassanein, the Palace Chamberlain, served a similar function at the Palace. The Embassy and the Government of Egypt could discuss concerns with the Palace through the Chamberlain, and vice versa. In March 1942 the King complained that Nahas was seeing him too frequently, and that he should go through his Chamberlain instead.[12] The Embassy generally found Hassanein to be cooperative and a good influence in the Palace, although they recognized that his pro-British attitude was due to political pragmatism rather than idealism. Hassanein urged the King to pursue a more conciliatory policy towards the Embassy because he believed that a cooperative Palace would convince the British that, when the Wafd Government had to be replaced eventually, a new Palace government could be pro-British as well. This would allay British fears that the fall of the Wafd would undermine Egyptian cooperation on the war effort.[13] Walter Smart, the Oriental Counsellor, realized that the Palace was doing so not out of real affection for Britain but rather "from the desire to get by friendly means what it has failed to get by hostile, i.e. independence of foreign control and internal domination."[14]

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[11] Minute by Smart, 29 April 1942, FO 141/829. Smart admitted that Amin Osman was frequently accused of having a "swollen head," which did not improve the situation. Minute by Smart, 20 July 1943 and Shone to Scrivener, 26 Oct. 1943, FO141/855. There was, however, a practical consideration that made it logical to keep him on as intermediary despite his shortcomings: his office was specially set up to accommodate the exchange of secret papers, an important consideration in wartime. Minute by Shone, 29 April 1942, FO 141/829.

[12] Lampson to FO, 25 March 1942, FO 371/31569.

[13] Killearn to Eden, 16 June 1943, FO371/35536. Note: Lampson was given the title Lord Killearn in January 1943, and this title was used in despatches after that date.

[14] Minute by Smart, 11 Dec. 1942, FO 141/837. The Embassy had a complex relationship with Hassanein. While, on the one hand, they viewed him as generally pro-British, and a positive influence on the King, they gradually came to suspect that behind his pro-British façade he was working to undermine the Embassy's interests. Killearn noted that he was "entirely pro-British at heart but I wouldn't put it past

Supporting the Wafd made good political sense to the British, yet at the same time they had to undertake a delicate balancing act to avoid alienating the other political forces in Egypt, in particular King Farouk and the Opposition. The new friendlier Palace attitude signaled to the Opposition that "the Wafd was no longer indispensable to the British." While the Embassy did not want to appear to be deserting the Wafd, who had supported the war effort, they also did not want to rebuff the King's efforts at reconciliation because, as Killearn noted, "The Throne is still the most permanent native power in the land, and its co-operation with us amidst the instability of Egyptian politics has been in the past, and might be in the future, most valuable."[15] While both the Palace and the Wafd were on better terms with the Embassy, there was still a "fundamental hostility" between the King and the Wafd that Killearn dated back to the time of King Fuad: "In the main it is a struggle between a Sovereign who wishes to govern instead of only ruling and a popular party which not only is insistent on constitutional government, but wishes to exploit that form of government to its exclusive advantage."[16]

The opposition parties were angry not only at Nahas for taking office with British support, but also with the British for putting him in power. The Embassy was faced with the challenge of trying not to alienate parties such as the Saadists and the Liberal Constitutionalists who had worked with Britain in the past, while at the same time publicly supporting the government in power and avoiding the appearance of any behind-

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him to be harbouring feelings of revenge for the Palace reverse last Spring, nor indeed to entertain personal ambition, but it would be no easy thing to unseat him from the Palace, nor at present do I see any reasonable or workable alternative." Killearn Diaries, 29 Nov. 1943. See also Killearn to Eden, 1 Jan. 1944, FO141/937.

15 Killearn to Eden, 31 Jan. 1943, FO371/35529.

16 Ibid.

the-scenes intrigue with the opposition. The British were well aware of the Arabic saying: "The English take a friend as a lemon, take the juice out of it, then throw away the skin and forget that it was a lemon."[17] They were determined to disprove this common belief in order to maintain their contacts within both the Wafd and the opposition parties.

The Abdin Palace Incident left unresolved the underlying issue that led to the intervention in the first place: the Palace Italians and other foreigners and Egyptians considered to be a threat to the Allied cause. The list of those targeted for removal included the leaders of religious and extreme nationalist groups, and former Prime Minister Ali Maher. Nahas repeatedly asked for more time. Killearn wanted to step back from publicly intervening in Egyptian affairs, so he agreed to allow Nahas to deal with this problem: "From every angle it is far better as things are at present that the Egyptian Government should do the work while we stay in the background as far as possible and keep them up to the mark."[18] Nahas discussed the issue of the Palace Italians with the King but Farouk "asks for time and he begs most earnestly that no record should be kept, that in the last resort he will turn to us for assistance if he has trouble with the Palace as knowledge of such an arrangement would destroy him."[19]

While understanding that the Prime Minister wanted to avoid the appearance of being too closely tied to Britain in an attempt to maintain his nationalist popularity, Foreign Office officials feared that this also made it more difficult for the British to hold him accountable: "We shall be poorly served if we have lost a friendly Government and

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17 Shone note on meeting with Amin Bey Youssef, 5 Feb. 1942, FO 141/829. Amin Youssef was speaking from experience.

18 Lampson to FO, 21 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31568.

19 Lampson to FO, 23 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31568.

gained ephemeral popularity only for support of the popular cause, yet find ourselves left with the seeds of the trouble still undisturbed in the earth."[20] The Foreign Office placed part of the blame for the Egyptian lack of resolution on this issue on Killearn's shoulders. Maurice Peterson, who had been so critical of Killearn's handling of the Abdin Palace crisis, noted that "All this is very Oriental…Sir M. Killearn is playing what I fear I must call his old game-having pressed strongly, and quite unnecessarily, for permission to go bald-headed for the Italians and Talaat, he now on getting the permission produces reasons why he should not act on it."[21] The issue was not resolved until November 1942, when Killearn finally negotiated a settlement with Hassanein.[22]

The new Prime Minister was hesitant to confront the Palace but he lost no time in attacking the Egyptian Opposition. Nahas had always made the holding of elections one of the conditions for his return to power, and one of his first acts on taking office was to dissolve the Parliament and call for elections. Nahas originally planned to allocate some seats to the opposition parties, but he ultimately decided not to give them any seats beyond those to which they were elected in retaliation for their protests against his taking office with British support. The Liberal and Saadists parties then threatened to boycott elections.[23]

The Wafd government was attacked locally for having come to power as a result

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[20] Minute by Scrivener, 24 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31568.

[21] Minute by Peterson, 7 May 1942, FO 371/31571.

[22] In keeping with his policy of relying on intermediaries, Killearn reported that he preferred to settle the issue "amicably with him, Hassanein, rather than have a head-on collision with His Majesty." Hassanein urged that one of the Italians, Pulli, be allowed to stay, as he was useful as a means of indirectly influencing Farouk, and because in a less official capacity he served as the King's "pimp." Killearn to FO, 18 Nov. 1942, FO 371/31575. In the end, Pulli and three other Italian domestic servants were allowed to remain in the Palace. Killearn to FO, 24 Nov. 1942, FO 371/31575.

of British force, and therefore being beholden to British interests. To counter this belief, Nahas raised the issue of treaty revision and representation at the Peace Conference to be held at the end of the war. Nahas admitted that he was raising the issue in response to pressure from Parliament to act on the petition he had issued while the Wafd was out of office.[24] The Wafd government also undertook measures to decrease foreign influence in Egypt, for example an Arabic language bill that made it obligatory for foreign firms to use Arabic in their transactions, another to prevent foreigners from owning agricultural property, and new limits on foreign missionary schools.[25] Killearn viewed these new measures as an attempt by the Wafd government to deflect criticism by showing "its nationalist impeccability by excessive assertion of Egyptism."[26] The Embassy was concerned about the long-term repercussions of this renewed xenophobia, because it would set an example that any post-Wafd government would have to follow in order to avoid accusations of accommodating foreigners. As Smart noted, "We have, therefore, every interest to take up a firm stand now before the foreign position in Egypt is by successive xenophobic measures irretrievably compromised."[27] This ultra-nationalist position was useful to the Wafd. It allowed them to counteract accusations of being too pro-British while in office, and put them in a position to resume their role as the main nationalist party when they eventually would fall from power.[28]

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[23] For the details of these negotiations, see Lampson to FO, 10 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31567; Lampson to FO, 23 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31568; Lampson to FO, 28 Feb. 1942, FO 371/31568.

[24] Killearn to FO, 11 June 1942, FO 371/31573. See Chapter 5.

[25] Killearn to FO, 1 Aug. 1942, FO 371/31573 and Killearn to FO, 27 Dec. 1942, FO 371/31565.

[26] Killearn to FO, 18 Aug. 1942, FO 371/31574.

[27] Minute by Smart, 21 April 1943, FO141/899.

The Nahas-Makram Split and the Black Book Affair, 1943

The efficiency of the Wafd government was undermined by struggles within the party, most importantly a growing rift between Nahas and Makram Ebeid, who had long served as Nahas's main adviser. In part the rift was personal, as Nahas's wife used her husband's position to garner preferential treatment for her relatives, which angered Makram.[29] There was also a religious dimension, as Makram was a Copt. The Coptic contingent within the Wafd was concerned that Nahas's cooperation with the British would result in a backlash against them, given their position as a Christian minority within Egypt.[30] While the Wafd out of office "could always point proudly to its continued possession of the jewel of patriotism-by which they, and 90% of Egyptians, mean an anti-British record," many party members believed that Nahas had compromised this principle by moving beyond the level of cooperation required by the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, and

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28 Memorandum by Ravensdale, 23 Sept. 1943, FO141/855.

29 The Embassy viewed this as essentially a personality conflict. Killearn explained: "This conflict was originally due to Madame Nahas, who was jealous of Makram Pasha's pre-eminent position and excited her husband by insinuating to him he was being made a figurehead while everyone knew that Makram Pasha was really running the Wafd. Nahas had previously taken few important actions without consulting Makram, who really did manage the Wafd for him. Nahas Pasha, under the influence of his wife, gradually began to take a more independent line and to act without consulting his powerful lieutenant. Makram, who is of a passionate and vindictive nature, greatly resented this diminution in his position." Killearn to FO, 28 Sept. 1942, FO 371/31574. One Foreign Office official noted that the Embassy's reports painted a "striking" picture of Nahas, strong on the war front yet manipulated by his wife: "a man of great courage, and probably sincerely devoted to the democratic ideal: but intolerably sensitive, impetuous, played upon and misled by an unscrupulous and self-seeking wife." Minute by Scrivener, 29 Oct. 1942, FO 371/31574. There was also animosity between Madame Nahas and Madame Makram Ebeid. Lampson to FO, 6 April 1942, FO 371/31570. For Zaynab Nahas's influence on her husband, see Terry, 278-279.

30 The British assumed that the Copts were powerful behind the scenes, and seemed to believe in a Coptic conspiracy, or the formation of what Killearn called a "Coptic cabal." As Killearn once wrote: "the subterranean influence of the Copts, particularly in the provinces, is appreciable, and large numbers of them are undoubtedly carrying on covert propaganda against Nahas Pasha." Killearn to Eden, 31 Jan. 1943, FO371/35529. The fears of the Copts that they might face repercussions from the rift with the Wafd proved well founded. The Embassy received reports that Copts and Coptic churches were attacked by mobs that official candidates hired during a February 1943 election to replace a deputy who had died in office. Professor Fay to Ravensdale, 18 Feb. 1943 and British Consular Agent, Sohag to Smart, 9 March 1943, FO141/855.

they called for a stricter interpretation of the Treaty.[31]

The rift between Nahas and Makram had potentially serious consequences for British policy in Egypt. Makram was the organizational genius of the party, and his departure would be a huge loss for Nahas, who was weak in this area.[32] This was a serious deficiency for a party built on widespread popular support, and for the British. If the party organization crumbled, its utility to the British would be undermined. At the same time, the Embassy had to be careful in intervening in this internal dispute, as they needed to avoid the appearance of favoring the Coptic element in the party.[33] In the end, the rift proved irreparable, and in May 1943 Nahas formed a new Cabinet without Makram.[34] His departure was a serious blow to the Wafd, as Killearn noted: "At its head is an unbalanced leader swayed by an irresponsible and headstrong wife...he lacks the ability for administration or for party organisation and is so obsessed with his hold on the populace that he often fails to appreciate the traps which his astuter opponents prepare for him."[35]

Sir Walter Smart, the Oriental Counsellor, reassessed British policy toward the Wafd government in light of this conflict between Nahas and Makram, and called for greater British intervention. It was in Britain's interests to keep the Wafd in power at

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31 Memorandum by Grafftey-Smith, 18 April 1942, FO 141/829.

32 Minute by Smart, 20 April 1942, FO 141/829.

33 Minute by Smart, 4 May 1942, FO 141/829.

34 Draft telegram, Lampson to Eden, 26 May 1942, FO 141/829. There were numerous attempts at brokering a reconciliation between the two men, one of the most interesting, recounted by Madame Amin Bey Fouad, concerned "three women of a Wafdist provincial committee, steady sort of bourgeoises who had played a considerable role in supporting the Wafd locally for a long time." They first visited Makram, who agreed to make peace with Nahas if he so desired, and then they visited Nahas, who treated them with "the utmost rudeness…. They were absolutely furious and said that they would work against Nahas in the Provinces." Minute by Smart, 8 June 1942, FO 141/829.

35 Lampson to FO, 31 May 1942, FO 371/31572.

least until the war turned in favor of the Allies:

> I do not think that we can leave the Wafd Government to its own devices any longer. If we wish to prolong its existence we must play an active part in guiding it on the right path. Nahas must be definitely controlled on vital issues affecting the continuance of his Government. After all, his Government was brought into power by British bayonets and its continuance depends solely on our support. He therefore must foot our bill if we really insist. This is not a moment to shelter ourselves behind the old formulae of not interfering in internal politics etc. For the security of our base we definitely do not want an anti-British Government in power.[36]

They should offer the Wafd "all possible veils to cover up our intervention" but the Government of Egypt would have to accept British guidance in crucial areas of concern for the war effort, for example supply issues.[37]

Smart justified this increased intervention on the principle of "he who pays the piper, calls the tune." Having put the Wafd in power, Britain had both the right and the responsibility to ensure sound administration and compliance with British aims and "I feel that we must take Nahas in hand, just as Cornwallis has taken Nuri, and prolong the Wafd's uncertain tenure."[38] No alternative government would be able to provide the domestic support needed for the war effort. Wafdist leaders were "playing the English card heavily" by blaming their repressive measures on British pressure. Smart reasoned that if the Wafdists were going to pass the blame to the British like that, then they had even more right to intervene and guide the government.[39]

Makram formed a new party, called the Independent Block, composed primarily of Copts who had been expelled from the Wafd. The Opposition, composed of the

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36 Minute by Smart, 3 June 1942, FO 141/829.
37 Ibid.
38 Minute by Smart, 5 June 1942, FO 141/829.
39 Minute by Smart, Oct. 1942, FO 141/829.

Saadists, Liberal Constitutionalists, and Makram's new party, initiated a renewed offensive against the government, provoking agitation and circulating petitions and rumors in order to undermine the Wafd Government. In January 1943 Killearn described these efforts as "mainly hot air," and Nahas's announcement of Britain's willingness to allow Egypt to directly participate in peace negotiations concerning Egypt was a "distinct blow" to this movement.[40] Yet this setback proved to be shortlived, as the Opposition fought back with its strongest weapon yet: the Black Book. This lengthy text, which purported to document all of the Wafd Government's abuses of power through corruption and nepotism, was presented to the King as a petition on March 28, 1943.[41] While many of these accusations had been spreading as rumor for months, the Black Book included actual official documents to back up these assertions. The book was widely circulated, with Smart estimating that between 20,000 and 35,000 copies were printed, and some copies even made their way outside Egypt to Palestine.[42]

The Foreign Office was concerned about the implications of this crisis: "Given the combination of the King's hatred of Nahas; the almost undoubted irregularities of Nahas' family; Nahas' ill-health, and the recent signs of cohesion amongst the opposition, we may be on the eve of far-reaching developments. I might add a fourth

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[40] Killearn to Eden, 31 Jan. 1943, FO371/35529.

[41] The release of this petition did not come as a surprise to the Embassy. Smart received a report from the Defence Security Office two days before the Black Book was presented to the King that Makram was preparing a pamphlet against the government. A police agent posed as a prospective printer for the pamphlets, leading to the arrest and confessions of two men. The government wanted to keep the case quiet to avoid information about the contents of the pamphlet reaching the public. The police also received information that Makram planned to try again by issuing the pamphlet as a petition to the King. Smart noted that he had received a copy of part of the pamphlet from the Defence Security Office. Jenkins, Defence Security Office to Smart and Minute by Smart, 26 March 1943, FO141/855.

[42] Minute by Smart, 1 April 1943, FO141/855.

factor-the present remoteness of the front from Egypt."[43] Killearn told the Foreign Office that his stance on the issue would be to "keep in the background as far as possible, in the role of the middle man working for the goodwill of both parties."[44] When he did intervene more directly, Killearn did so on the basis of the Treaty: "the necessity, in the interest of the security of our Middle Eastern base, that a Government should be in power willing to co-operate whole-heartedly with us on the basis of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and able to give effect to that policy through the support of a majority in the country."[45] The fact that the Wafd still had the support of the majority of Egyptians justified keeping them in office.[46]

The King began a public boycott of the Government in response to these allegations. Killearn was concerned that, having gotten on better terms with the Embassy, Farouk might use this improved relationship as a basis for getting rid of Nahas.[47] Killearn

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[43] Minute by Scrivener, 8 April 1943, FO371/35531. Nahas was suffering from "congestion of the prostate gland," and there was some debate as to the extent of his illness and whether he could continue in office. In March 1943 the prospect of Nahas having to resign due to illness led the Foreign Office to ask the Embassy who would be a logical successor as Prime Minister, and Killearn responded that he would not want to speculate on this until events made it necessary. Peterson was concerned that the Embassy could not, or would not, answer this question, and noted that "Either the Oriental Counsellor is being bottled up by the Ambassador or it is more than time for a change in that post." Minute by Peterson, 1 April 1943, FO371/35530 and Killearn to FO, 13 March 1943, FO141/906. Peterson also pointed out that Nahas might use the Black Book affair as an excuse to resign, under the pretext of a disagreement with the Palace, in order to put himself in a good position to hold office again in the future. Minute by Peterson, 8 April 1943, FO 371/35531.

[44] Killearn to FO, 9 April 1943, FO141/855. In response, Eden noted that "I am not altogether happy about the 'background' role you have assigned yourself." FO to Killearn, 12 April 1943, FO371/35531.

[45] Killearn to Eden, 16 June 1943, FO371/35536.

[46] In order to confirm that the Wafd was indeed still the popular party, the Embassy gathered information from consular agents and representatives sent to the provinces in order to ascertain the real extent of this support. From these surveys they estimated that while the Wafd did not have the support it did before, it could still garner about 60 per cent of the country's vote in a free election. Killearn to Eden, 16 June 1943, FO371/35536.

[47] Killearn noted in his diary: "I believe King F. feels that now having as he thinks got upon good terms with the British Embassy he can with impunity tackle Nahas as Public Enemy No.1. I should surmise that in the royal mind there is the idea that having first disposed of Public Enemy No. 1 he will thereafter

urged Hassanein to prevent the King from taking action against Nahas. This put Hassanein in a difficult position as intermediary between the Palace and the British. As a result of his efforts to rein in the King, he was being called the "'Chef de cabinet of the British Ambassador,'" implying that he was working to support British interests rather than those of the Palace.[48] Hassanein even contemplated resigning his position in protest against British interference.[49]

Before deciding on their response, the Embassy investigated the accusations made in the Black Book. The Crown Advocate concluded that many of the charges seemed to be exaggerated and "They do not appear to be supported by adequate proof…"[50] Most British officials took a pragmatic approach to Egyptian corruption and favoritism, accepting it as part of doing business in the country. In fact, British officials sometimes worked within this system to secure appointments fort their own local clients. The Embassy accepted a certain amount of corruption as a hallmark of Egyptian politics and the local patron-client system. The Wafd faced distinct challenges as it was a popular party and, on taking office, had to reward its supporters. Killearn observed: "It must be remembered that corruption, nepotism and favouritism are features in all Egyptian Governments. The trouble with the Wafd is that having a larger *clientèle* to satisfy than the minority parties, its misdeeds on these lines must be wider spread and thus better

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be better in a position to tackle 'Public Enemy No. 2'-to wit myself whom he obviously can never forgive for what happened on February 4th last year!" Killearn Diaries, 8 April 1943.

48 Killearn to FO, 9 April 1943, FO141/855.

49 Minute by Smart, 13 April 1943, FO141/855.

50 H.B.M. Crown Advocate in Egypt, W.R. Fanner, analysis of the Black Book, 14 April 1943, FO141/855. Churchill told Killearn in November 1943 that "he really didn't understand why we had been so disturbed over the original Black Book, the synopsis (which we sent him) not having seemed to him particularly serious." Minute by Killearn, 17 Jan. 1944, FO141/962.

known."[51] One Egyptian official, in a conversation with Smart, pointed out that while the Wafd's reputation had been hurt by the corruption charges, it had been strengthened in the provinces through the extension of patronage: "So many persons, he said, were now interested in the continuance of the Wafd for corrupt purposes. All the many persons involved in the distribution of supplies, etc., were making large sums of money and had no wish to see the Wafd go out."[52] Similarly, the Wafd could not easily get rid of supporters who proved to be incompetent or corrupt. Just as the British, during the Black Book affair, decided that it was more important to support their friends and to avoid charges that they abandoned them in difficult times than it was to fight corruption, so Nahas had to avoid appearing weak and unable to support his own clients.

The Embassy tried to place the responsibility for resolving this dispute back on the Egyptians by arguing that, rather than dismissing the Wafd Government outright, the Palace should give it the opportunity to defend itself. As Smart observed, it would not be necessary to have 100% exoneration, but enough "to convince the non-partisan public and ourselves that the corruption of the present Government as alleged by the 'Black Book' is not greater than that of previous Governments which have not been hounded out of power for having sinned as much as the Wafd Government."[53] In a direct audience with the King, Killearn got his agreement to give Nahas a chance to face the allegations, although they continued to dispute the best way for this to happen.[54]

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[51] Killearn to Eden, 29 Nov. 1943, FO371/35541.

[52] Minute by Smart on conversation with Ahmed Seddik, May 1944, FO141/937.

[53] Memorandum by Smart, 13 April 1943, FO141/855.

[54] Killearn to FO, 14 April 1943, FO371/35531. This direct audience gave rise to rumors that Killearn had presented Farouk with an ultimatum to keep Nahas in power, and Smart and Killearn discussed the possibility of using whisperers to get the truth about the interview out in public. Killearn

Nahas took two approaches to dealing with the British on this issue. On the one hand he attempted to play the various British authorities in Egypt off of each other. The Prime Minister told Killearn that "He suspected that the British Government no longer acted on the advice of the Embassy. He made the direct charge that there were many others in Egypt and in Cairo whose advice was now preferred in London to that of the Ambassador."[55] Nahas also used another common tactic, reminding Killearn that the British got rid of Egyptian governments as soon as they had served their purpose.[56] The British often faced this charge of letting down their friends when the situation became difficult.

The question facing the Embassy, in this instance, was who was Britain's friend, Nahas or the King? King Farouk had been improving his relationship with the Embassy, and the British valued good relations with the King because he was a permanent presence in the country, unlike the ephemeral Egyptian governments. As for Nahas, the Prime Minister had delivered the goods in the darkest days of "the Flap," keeping Egypt steady when the threat of Axis occupation seemed greatest. Yet Nahas had not proven as cooperative on supply issues.[57] Eden himself weighed in on this debate, concluding: "Surely Nahas is our friend and the king is not. Let us stand by our friends."[58] The

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however had reservations, noting "I am a bit doubtful of the use of 'whisperers' etc. because I never know what they will in fact say." Minutes by Smart and Killearn, 15 April 1943, FO 141/855.

55 Killearn Diaries, 10 April 1943. Nahas had some success with this approach. Killearn hotly denied Nahas's accusation, but he also confided in his diary that he wrote a note to General Wilson on this point because "I am not entirely convinced that there may not be just a little something in it. Not that I supposed for one moment that the military intentionally meant to run counter to what I am doing but our soldiers are always a little inclined to rush in just a trifle unwisely or to do things which can be so easily misinterpreted in a place like this." Killearn Diaries, 11 April 1943.

56 Killearn to FO, 10 April 1943, FO371/35531.

57 Minute by Peterson, 14 April 1943, FO371/35531.

58 Minute by Eden on Killearn to FO, 12 April 1943, FO371/35531.

Foreign Office decided to stand by Nahas, giving him "the strongest possible support." Nahas may not be able to completely refute the charges, but the Foreign Office believed he would be able "to confuse the issues successfully."[59]

Killearn welcomed these instructions, but his Oriental Counsellor, Sir Walter Smart, expressed his "serious alarm": "The substance of this telegram is that it is better to condone corruption than to let down our friends. This theory, surely novel in our imperial history, is developed with a cynicism astonishing in an official telegram."[60] Since the British brought the Wafd to power through the threat of force, they bore responsibility for this government. Appearing to condone corruption in Egypt would reflect poorly on British prestige in Egypt and would undermine "the legend of British honesty" in Egypt, dating back to Cromer. For Smart, this was not just an ethical issue, but one with real ramifications for the work of the Embassy: "I have always found that the legend of British honesty was of the greatest help to me in many different positions where often I had not force on my side." When force was not available to impose their will, reputation and prestige had to suffice. Losing this reputation for honesty would "be more disastrous for our material interests than anything else that might come out of the crisis."[61]

Smart's moral argument may have been influenced by a letter of protest that Killearn received from the Opposition leaders, in which they also based their critique of

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59 FO to Killearn, 21 April 1943, FO141/855.

60 Memorandum by Smart, 22 April 1943, FO141/855. Smart attributed this decision to three members of the Egyptian Department who had served in Egypt, noting that they seemed to be assuming that the Wafd of 1943 was the same party they had known in the 1930s. While still supported by a majority in the country, Smart believed that this majority was declining, and the more powerful groups in Egyptian society, "the really active, powerful and enlightened elements," were against the Wafd on this corruption issue.

61 Ibid.

British support for the Wafd on a moral argument: "Great Britain which has always placed her moral ideals before all other considerations, cannot admit that the acts of her Government do not always serve these high ideals."[62] Thus, the protest of the opposition seized on the argument of Britain's moral reputation in Egypt to try and convince it not to support the Wafd government.

While debating how to respond to the Black Book, the Embassy learned that the Wafd was organizing protests at the Palace, as was the Opposition.[63] The Publicity Section at the Embassy received reports that the Saadist party was undertaking a whispering campaign against the British with the goal of inciting a rebellion and urging the people to "join in a 'Jihad' for independence." The Saadists planned a demonstration in support of the King but the Government stopped it.[64]

Killearn decided, on the advice of Walter Moyne, to try a new tactic, "shifting the issue from corruption charge to democracy principle."[65] The majority of the people would decide the fate of Nahas's government, rather than the King or the Embassy.[66] The King wanted a new neutral government in place before the elections were held, but the Embassy opposed this proposed change. Killearn took a pragramatic view of Egyptian

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62 Note Verbale presented to Killearn, 17 April 1943, FO371/35533. The letter was signed by Heikal, the president of the Liberal Constitutionalists, Ahmed Maher, president of the Saadists, and Makram, head of the independent Wafdists. The Opposition also petitioned Farouk to dismiss the Wafd Government. Killearn to FO, 18 April 1943, FO371/35532. Killearn also received a petition from Hoda Shaarawi, President of the Feminist League of Egypt, signed by prominent Egyptian women. It protested British intervention on behalf of the Wafd. The Egyptian police were ordered by the Prime Minister to raid Shaarawi's house as a result of this letter. Shaarawi was not a popular figure at the Embassy. Killearn noted that "She is a very troublesome woman and anti-British" and one Foreign Office official complained that "She is always seeking out some new reason for protesting against our activities, or alleged activities, or inactivity." Killearn to Eden, 23 April 1943 and Minute by Chapman Andrews, 4 May 1943, FO371/35533.

63 Report by Tomlyn, 4 May 1943 and Minute by Smart, 5 May 1943, FO141/855.

64 Major C.A.Lea, Publicity Section, Political Note, 7 May 1943, FO141/855.

65 Killearn to FO, 7 May 1943, FO371/35533.

elections. They would be rigged whether they were held by a Wafd Government or an Opposition one, but the Wafd still had a majority in the country and "it will matter less if they fake the elections than if the other parties were to have. A little faking more or less would not alter the fact that the majority of the country were represented in the results whereas with the Opposition parties that would not be the case."[67] Smart disagreed because they would in effect be asking the King to allow an admittedly corrupt government to hold rigged elections.[68] Killearn acknowledged in his recommendation to the Foreign Office that Smart "disagrees fundamentally" with this line, but he justified his decision on the basis that it "is dominated by what I conceive to be the war interest and vitally important need of having a continued stable base in Egypt till the end of the war."[69] For the Ambassador, the short-term requirements of the war took precedence over the long-term issue of Britain's reputation in Egypt, whereas Smart viewed the issue within the local Egyptian context.

Churchill took Smart's side on this issue: "It is a very serious thing for the occupying Power to shield a corrupt Government. Our position in Oriental lands, including India, has always been the opposite." Given the large British military presence and the fact that "the enemy has been driven thousands of miles away," Churchill

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66 Killearn Diaries, 7 May 1943.

67 Ibid., 23 April 1943.

68 Once again making a moral argument, Smart stated: "From a long and varied experience of the East I have acquired the firm conviction that it is impossible to succeed with complicated policies in dealing with Orientals who are far cleverer at that game and can always end by involving us in disaster…The simplest course in this business is to be on the side of justice." Minute by Smart, 24 April 1943, FO141/855.

69 Killearn to Foreign Office, 24 April 1943, FO141/855.

suggested that they should "let things crash" and wait to intervene later if necessary.[70] The Foreign Office supported Killearn: the charges against Nahas were no worse than those that could be made "against any oriental potentate in any oriental country at any time in history," and it was important for the long term to keep the Wafd's friendship.[71]

The Black Book affair was taken to Parliament, resulting in a vote of confidence for Nahas.[72] Farouk sent a Memo to Killearn on May 17th, noting that he had taken Killearn's advice and given Nahas's government a chance to clear its name before Parliament. After five weeks of debates he concluded that a new government was necessary as "the present Cabinet has lost all moral authority in the country." However, he would keep the Wafd Government in power if the British insisted that doing so was necessary for the war effort, in effect trying to pass the responsibility back to the Embassy.[73] Both Killearn and the Foreign Office objected to the implication that Farouk would only keep the government in power if Britain insisted, as this would allow him to blame Britain any time the Wafd government did something objectionable.[74] Killearn did not think Britain should accept this proposal and again raised the issue of elections.[75] Smart had reservations about the effectiveness of elections, as they might destabilize the country: "I am not afraid of revolutions but, if they are to be made, it is essential that they

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70 Personal Minute by Churchill for Eden, 25 April 1943, FO371/35534.

71 Minute by Scrivener, 27 April 1943, FO371/35534.

72 Makram presented his case over three sittings of the Chamber, and then withdrew, along with the Opposition, on the fourth day in protest at not being allowed to continue. Therefore, when the vote of confidence was called, it passed unanimously because the Opposition boycotted it. Killearn to Eden, 16 June 1943, FO371/35536.

73 Memorandum from Farouk, 17 May 1943, FO141/855.

74 Killearn to FO, 18 May 1943, FO141/855.

75 Killearn to FO, 18 May 1943, FO371/35534.

should be made by capable men. Can any of us believe that a revolution organised by Nahas and his gang of baladi amateurs can possibly organise stability in the country?"[76]

Killearn accepted Smart's argument and finally dropped the idea of holding elections. July 1943, on the eve of the Allied invasion of Sicily, was "a particularly awkward moment" for Britain to risk unrest in Egypt and the possible diversion of troops. Nahas himself seemed to be "luke-warm" about the idea of elections.[77] A Foreign Office official attributed Nahas's lack of enthusiasm for an election to his realization of the Wafd's declining popularity.[78] Yet the Embassy had other reasons for questioning this policy. The British hoped these elections would be a vote of confidence for the Wafd and absolve the party from charges of corruption. Hassanein told Smart that the Wafd found the Black Book issue to be too risky as a basis for elections and "had considered that it would be necessary to find some national issue, i.e. an anti-British one, to rally the electorate." Smart noted that "Hassanein's warning, although interested, should, I think, be heeded."[79] The elections could backfire and turn into an anti-British protest.

The Black Book affair ended rather inconclusively. Farouk allowed Nahas to stay in power. The elections were not held, so the Wafd never had to take the issue to the country as Killearn had wanted. Nonetheless, Killearn concluded that "we have at least achieved our main object—namely no change likely to upset local stability of our base in the immediate future."[80]

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76 Minute by Smart, 21 May 1943, FO141/855.
77 Killearn to FO, 22 May 1943, FO371/35534.
78 Minute by Chapman Andrews, 23 May 1943, FO371/35534.
79 Memorandum by Smart, 25 May 1943, FO141/855.
80 Killearn to Eden, 26 May 1943, FO371/35535.

The episode offers a number of important insights into Britain's relationship with Egypt during the war, and the role that the Embassy played in these negotiations. The decision to support Nahas and the Wafd even at the risk of eroding Britain's moral authority reveals the importance the British placed on maintaining their collaborative networks. Britain firmly believed the Wafd still had the support of the majority of the country, and it needed a strong, popular party in power with support to get what it needed for the war effort. Losing the cooperation of the Wafd had possible long-term repercussions. At some point the Wafd would return to power again, and if Britain had let them down they would have been less cooperative in future. A party with real popular support could use that popularity either to support the British or to undermine them. This episode also highlights the importance of the Embassy's intermediaries. Given the corruption charges Killearn was even less willing to be seen publicly meeting with Nahas, so Amin Osman played a vital role as their point of contact.[81] The Black Book affair also revealed the negotiations among British officials within the Embassy itself, between the Embassy and London, and among the various interests such as the Minister of State and military authorities. Each had a different perspective and interest.

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81 While both Amin Osman with the Wafd and Hassanein at the Palace proved useful as intermediaries during the Black Book crisis, the Embassy got caught in the middle of a case of "he said-he said" involving these intermediaries. Both men informed Smart that the other had proposed that one of them should form a government as a way to resolve the situation. After receiving these two completely contradictory stories, Smart observed that it was impossible to determine which was true, and it seemed as if "either may have wanted us to get the story from its side in order that the other side might appear to have taken the initiative." Memorandum by Smart, 30 April 1943, FO141/855. One Foreign Office official noted this might have been an attempt by Hassanein to entice Amin Osman to leave Nahas, thereby removing him as an intermediary with the Embassy: "Amin is regarded in Palace circles as on the British rather than the Egyptian side and I believe the King has asked in many quarters the rhetorical question 'is Amin Osman an Egyptian Civil Servant or employed by the Residency?' Amin is regarded in such circles as a baneful influence." Giving him a ministerial position would force Amin Osman "out into the open," a comment which reflected the common belief in Cairo that he was working as an agent for the Embassy. Minute by Chapman Andrews, 3 May 1943, FO371/35533.

After the Black Book affair, Nahas made some concessions to Britain in return for their continued support. Amin Osman was appointed Minister of Finance in Nahas's Cabinet reorganization in May 1943. Britain and Egypt were engaged in tense negotiations over supply issues and Killearn noted that with this appointment "seventy-five percent of our day to day difficulties should disappear."[82] Amin Osman's ministerial appointment also facilitated the appointment of Mr. Baxter as a Financial Expert within the Ministry of Finance. [83] The Opposition attacked this appointment as a return to the days of the Protectorate, when Britain had advisers in various Egyptian ministries, and saw it as a concession made by Nahas in return for British support.[84] Given this strong opposition, it was particularly important that the Ministry of Finance was led by a strong pro-British collaborator. Amin Osman continued to serve as Nahas's intermediary with the Embassy, but there were signs that he was losing favor with the Prime Minister. An Embassy agent noted rumors circulating in Cairo that Amin Osman was vying to succeed Nahas as Prime Minister and was doing so with the Embassy's support.[85]

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[82] Killearn to Eden, 26 May 1943, FO371/35535. While outside the scope of this study, supply issues were a constant source of tension between Egypt and Britain during the war years. In addition to controlling prices within Egypt, Britain was attempting to buy Egyptian wheat surpluses for export to other parts of the region. However, public opinion believed that wheat needed in Egypt was being sold abroad, and Britain faced the challenge of convincing Egyptians that they were only exporting surpluses. Minute by Smart, interview with Muhamed Bey Sultan, 3 June 1943, FO141/855.

[83] Killearn was initially disappointed in Baxter, noting in his diary that "It was I who practically forced him upon the Egyptians with the vague hope that he might be able to guide their faltering footsteps in the realm of high finance and national economy." Yet Baxter got ill on arrival in Egypt, did not get along with Amin Osman, and complained to Killearn that he was being ill-used by the Egyptians "and more or less claiming that he ought to have the same status and be treated the same way both by the Egyptians and the Embassy as the late Financial Adviser in pre-Treaty days." Killearn Diaries, 11 March 1944. Killearn told Baxter that "it was no use trying to get any 'Financial Adviser' stuff over these days. Times had changed since he was last in Egypt and the technique was now quite different. My personal experience was that with the use of tact the Egyptians were generally very responsive." Killearn Diaries, 7 May 1944.

[84] Killearn to Eden, 16 June 1943, FO371/35536.

[85] Minute by Ravensdale, 18 Sept. 1943, FO141/855. Whatever Amin Osman's ambitions for the Premiership might have been, Smart reported that they were seriously weakened by his first speech in the

Amin Osman established his own client network by offering jobs to supporters, some of whom were engaged in corruption. Ravensdale of the Oriental Secretariat justified Amin Osman's actions: "Amin is trying to fend off the constant pressure brought to bear upon him by interested persons near the P.M. by putting them into committees…Possibly they rake in some illicit shekels by this means." He suggested that they not embarrass him by raising this issue, given the pressures under which he was working.[86] Amin Osman was a success from the British perspective in his position as Minister of Finance. Among other things he implemented conversion loans which absorbed some of the excess money in Egypt due to the Allies' military spending in the country.[87] Killearn had been "more than a little doubtful" about the appointment, but Amin Osman had "made good beyond expectation" and "brought a breath of much needed fresh air into the administration." However, "he is not omnipotent by any means and has to keep the ear of Nahas."[88]

Senate as Minister of Finance, because his command of Arabic was "exceedingly bad and was described as the sort of Arabic which an Englishman might use." Minute by Smart, 20 July 1943, FO141/855. The fact that Amin Osman, around the time of his appointment, published an article in the Egyptian newspaper *Akher Sa'a* entitled "Why I love the English," did not help his reputation with Egyptian officials. Weekly Political and Economic Report," 4 June 1943, FO371/35535.

86 Draft note submitted by Ravensdale, 9 Dec. 1943, FO141/855. Smart agreed, noting "We don't want to attack Amin." Minute by Smart, 10 Dec. 1943, FO141/855. To give an example of the complexity of Egyptian patronage networks: Amin Osman contacted Smart to try and get a job on the Board of Bank Misr for Amin Youssef, who had served as an important collaborator with the Embassy during the 1930s and repeatedly asked the Embassy for help in getting a job. Smart spoke with the head of Bank Misr, who said that he was under pressure from Nahas and Madame Nahas to put Wafdist supporters and relatives on the board instead. One of Madame Nahas's relatives gave him "a quite clear intimation" that if he allowed these appointments, "all the difficulties which the Bank Misr were at present experiencing with the Government would disappear." Memorandum by Smart, 16 Dec. 1943, FO141/886. Amin Osman recounted another example to the Embassy staff: "He had wanted some aspirin and had applied to the Ministry of Health whereupon-no doubt to curry favour with him-the Ministry had sent him a whole large case of bottles of aspirin. That was how things were done in Egypt and always would be." Killearn Diaries, 14 Dec. 1943.

87 Killearn to Eden, 1943 Annual Report, 25 Feb. 1944, FO371/41327.

88 Killearn to FO, 30 Dec. 1943, FO141/855.

Having twice intervened on behalf of Nahas, the Embassy felt some responsibility to ensure good government and grew increasingly concerned about the Wafd's abuse of wartime power, particularly because the Wafd regime was so closely associated with the British in the Egyptian public's mind. The Wafd abused wartime censorship in order to silence opposition and used martial law as a cover for arrests and internments made for reasons of political expediency.[89] These abuses led Killearn to conclude that "Unfortunately the democratic functioning of the parliamentary system seems to be unrealisable in the Middle East. The parliamentary system in these countries seems to tend inevitably to the dictatorship of the strongest party."[90]

The Embassy took a new line with the Wafd, pressuring it to focus on internal Egyptian affairs. The Wafd had been formed to gain Egyptian independence, and once the Treaty was signed it had lost its raison d'être.[91] Eden suggested to Killearn that he should encourage the Prime Minister to rethink and reform the Wafd party platform.[92] The Ambassador in turn urged Nahas to focus his attention on social issues and the poor as a means of winning support. The Wafd held a Congress in November 1943 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Party's founding and party leaders presented programs for the kinds of internal reforms that Britain advocated. Killearn did not hold much hope that the Wafd would follow through on these plans, but "the tendency is healthy, not only because it is high time that the Government of Egypt did something for the masses of Egypt, but

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89 Scrivener to Shone, 6 Sept. 1943, Shone to Scrivener, 9 Oct. 1943, Minute by Smart, 5 Oct. 1943, FO141/855.

90 Killearn to Eden, 29 Nov. 1943, FO371/35541.

91 Killearn to Eden, 25 Nov. 1943, FO371/35541.

92 Eden to Killearn, 5 May 1943, FO141/855.

also because attention to the realities of social reform may give Egyptians less time to waste on sterile discussions of impracticable foreign policies."[93]

After the removal of Rashid Ali and Ali Maher from power, Britain turned from the principle of "Public Enemy No. 1" to what Peterson called "the doctrine of irreplaceability." He defined this as "that type of diplomacy and that type of diplomatic mind which seizes on a single figure in the country concerned--generally a dictator or a semi-dictator--and holds it indispensable," and then cited Nuri and Nahas as prime examples.[94] Britain supported both leaders out of a sense of obligation. Having brought them to power, they could not be seen to be abandoning their friends after they had supported Britain at a crucial time in the war. British officials also feared that their replacements might be even less cooperative. This concern resulted in a greater degree of administrative intervention in the internal affairs of both countries, which Britain justified on the basis of the demands of the war. The British occupation of Iraq and the presence of British troops in Egypt allowed them to impose this intervention despite local opposition. Yet "standing by their friends" brought its own dangers. In Egypt, Britain supported an admittedly corrupt government that was losing popularity. In Iraq, their support for Nuri bolstered the "old gang" of politicians at a time when these politicians were losing favor. In both cases, administrative reform provided a useful cover for British intervention.

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93 Killearn to Eden, 29 Nov. 1943, FO371/35541.

94 Minute by Peterson, 18 Jan. 1944, FO371/40041. Peterson goes on to argue that, rather than supporting these leaders out of fear of what might happen in the event of change, "It is far better if things are going badly to use our influence in so far as we properly can, and perhaps a little further, to effect a change even although we cannot quite see the way before us."

Chapter 8: "Considerations of Force" and the Rhetoric of Opposition in Egypt, 1943-45[1]

> with powder in the gun I maintain that in the East it is usually unnecessary to discharge it. The knowledge we mean business is enough.
>
> --Lord Killearn, 1946[2]

One of the lessons the British took away from the 1942 Abdin Palace Incident was that when King Farouk saw they were serious about using force he backed down and compromised "with a good grace."[3] Therefore, for the rest of the war the threat of force was considered to be a useful tool to ensure Palace compliance. The Black Book affair was the first in a series of debates in 1943 and 1944 between British civilian and military authorities over the possibility of threatening to use force to persuade the King to continue to support the Wafd government over his objections.[4]

Britain had a large number of troops in Egypt during the war, both for the campaign in the Western Desert and as a staging area for the rest of the Middle East. Yet in each of these three cases when Nahas's government was threatened Britain hesitated to use them to deal with internal security issues in Egypt. What was it that made British officials, both in Cairo and London, consider breaking with their wartime status quo policy for Egypt, and what ultimately stopped them from using large scale military force to reoccupy the country? The answer lies in the confluence of Britain's changing wartime priorities, its historical role in Egypt, the British Ambassador's own personal approach to

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1 Lampson used this phrase in a 1939 letter, arguing that Farouk could only be influenced "by considerations of force." Lampson to Halifax, 3 Feb. 1939, FO371/23304.

2 Cairo to FO, 6 March 1946, FO371/53288.

3 Minute by Chapman Andrews, 23 May 1943, FO371/35534.

4 For the Black Book Affair, see Chapter 7.

diplomacy, and the threat of a violent response on the part of Egyptians. For the British were not the only ones contemplating the use of force in Egypt. Egyptian leaders were able to use the possibility of unrest as a form of leverage and take advantage of the room for local agency provided by Britain's wartime constraints.

The debates over the threat of force owed much to Killearn's own philosophy of diplomacy. Building on his experience in China, he firmly believed that he needed to have the threat of force as an option to ensure compliance on the part of local leaders. Without it, he would be unable to assert British interests and faced the possible loss of British prestige. This was particularly the case with respect to King Farouk. As Killearn explained on the eve of World War II: "A youthful and headstrong Oriental potentate can in the end only be swayed by considerations of force. It lies with us so to strengthen our position in the Eastern Mediterranean that neither King Farouk nor his entourage can have any doubt of our power to defend Egypt, and, if necessary, to force her rulers to comply with our wishes."[5]

While the Black Book crisis was ultimately resolved through political and diplomatic channels, a parallel discussion developed among British officials as to the viability of using force to support the Wafd and unseat Farouk, once again pitting the Embassy against the military authorities. The Black Book affair was the first time during Nahas's wartime government that Britain seriously considered this option, but it set a pattern that would be repeated again in 1944. Concerned that British military officials might be asked to use force to keep Nahas's government in power, General Stone warned

that, given the Wafd's unpopularity with the Egyptian army, police, and most of the upper classes, "Should any kind of military action be taken by us against the King, it would undoubtedly arouse strong anti-British feelings throughout the country and this might well result in some interference with our war effort even if this took no more serious a form than a certain degree of non-cooperation."[6] The service chiefs also believed that they had lost the element of surprise. Britain had "played the force card" in 1942, and the use of force as a means of influencing the Egyptian Government to take a more pro-British line was now closed. The Egyptian army would be prepared for such action in the future and would respond militarily.[7]

After hearing the service chiefs' reservations, Killearn wrote to the Foreign Office. If the British let events proceed without intervention and Nahas's government fell, they would be charged with abandoning their friends and they would lose the support of the majority party. Killearn was loathe to allow the Embassy to suffer such a blow to its prestige, and believed that the threat of force would be enough to win a concession from the King: "weakness does not pay and never will in Egypt. I believe, knowing Egyptian character, that the application of coercion would not be required and that the knowledge we had it in reserve would be sufficient."[8]

Killearn's telegram had the desired result in London. Churchill instructed General Wilson to support Killearn as necessary by providing troops, because a simple

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[5] Killearn to Halifax, 3 Feb. 1939, FO 371/23304.

[6] General Stone, "Some Military Considerations in Connection with the Present Political Situation," 26 April 1943, FO141/855.

[7] Embassy meeting minutes, 26 May 1942, FO141/837.

demonstration of force would most likely be sufficient.[9] Killearn was quite pleased with this response. While it would be difficult to know exactly how to use force if it came to that, just having the option "immeasurably strengthens my hand."[10] The service chiefs however felt that the Foreign Office had not taken their perspective into account. Maurice Peterson at the Foreign Office expressed sympathy for the views of the service chiefs, attributing their hesitance to the fact that they had been committed to the removal of Farouk during the Abdin Palace incident in 1942: "The Generals do not like their dramatisation for political purposes: they fear it may happen again: and they have communicated their apprehensions to Mr. Casey."[11] Casey, the Minister of State, agreed with the military authorities and suggested that they should take "all reasonable efforts" to keep Nahas in office "short of threat or use of force." It would be better for Nahas to fall than to use force and dismiss Farouk. Casey did not believe that the alternative of a non-Wafd government was as bad as Killearn portrayed it.[12]

These threats of force were never carried through, and the Black Book crisis was resolved with Nahas still in power. Farouk took a more conciliatory attitude to Killearn, which the Ambassador attributed to "the foreknowledge of rods in pickle."[13] As one

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8 Killearn to FO, 29 April 1943, FO371/35532. The Embassy was very deliberate in the language used in this telegram. Killearn noted in his diary that he used the phrase "weakness never pays" because it was "just the sort of phrase that would catch our Prime Minister's attention." Killearn Diaries, 2 May 1943.

9 Churchill to Wilson, forwarded by the Foreign Office to Killearn, 1 May 1943, FO371/35532.

10 Killearn Diaries, 2 May 1943.

11 Memorandum by Peterson for Eden, 5 May 1943, FO371/35533.

12 Casey to FO for Eden, 4 May 1943, FO371/35533. While Killearn was frustrated by Casey's opposition, he was complimentary of the role played by Walter Moyne, who was part of the Minister of State's staff, noting: "he was the only member of the meeting who has any grasp whatsoever of the political import of the whole of this business." Killearn Diaries, 3 May 1943. Killearn on Casey: "I like Casey. I don't think he has got any profound political sense but he is certainly very well meaning and a very nice fellow." Killearn Diaries, 7 May 1943.

13 Killearn to Eden, 26 May 1943, FO371/35535.

official noted, the resolution of the Black Book affair demonstrated that when Farouk saw they were serious about using force he backed down and compromised "with a good grace."[14] Killearn reflected in his diary that this was probably the best settlement they could have hoped for, and given "impending military developments" it was better "to take what we could get peacefully rather than have a struggle with the Monarch" and risk unrest. He was grateful that London gave him the backing he asked for despite the opposition of the Minister of State and the service chiefs: "It all goes to prove once more that if you show a firm front with these people here you may expect to get your way."[15] For Killearn, a firm hand was required not just for the Egyptians, but for the other British authorities as well.

After the Black Book affair, Egyptian politics reached an impasse. Relations between the Palace and the Wafd continued to be tense. In an insightful observation, Scrivener, the head of the Egyptian Department, observed that "both sides have so manoeuvred as always to leave outstanding at least one issue which could be worked up

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14 Minute by Chapman Andrews, 23 May 1943, FO371/35534.

15 Killearn Diaries, 22 May 1943. In his diary entry for May 31 Killearn quoted at length from a letter he received from Chapman Andrews in the Foreign Office which reveals the interplay between the Embassy, Foreign Office, and Prime Minister in making policy decisions. Chapman Andrews wrote: "You must have been very gratified though at the support given you here at home. You got in effect carte blanche and you were in a minority of one--the C's-in-C and the Minister of State being against you…The P.M. and the S. of S. were with you up to the hilt though the former at first wondered whether it was wise to support a corrupt government. A.E. however urged 'stick to your friends' and the P.M., having once agreed, was prepared to stick through thick and thin. It was, quite frankly, a vote of confidence in you personally which was very gratifying to you (and to me) but fraught with dangers. For I have discovered that in this life jealousy plays a leading--or rather one of the leading parts and there would have been not a few 'what did I tell you's?' if things had come unstuck. You played your cards, if I may say so, without a fault and the King saw the red light (your hint to Hassanein about 'which I devoutly hope H.M. will find it wise to adopt' and, I believe, danger signals well wrapped up, but clear enough, sent to Abdin by friends in this country screaming 'Look out, watch your step, remember February 4th')."

instantaneously into a first-class quarrel."[16] The question was, what issue would provoke this confrontation? Scrivener later noted: "The fact is that as soon as the King thinks he can dismiss Nahas without risking a show-down (and maybe his own dismissal) with us, he will do so: and that as soon as Nahas thinks he can raise the constitutional issue in Egypt, he will do so. Unless there are some unforeseen developments, we cannot yet allow the one thing or the other to happen."[17] No dispute that could potentially turn into a government crisis resulting in Nahas's dismissal could be allowed to pass unnoticed by the Embassy. Farouk would seize any sign of weakness or hesitation on Britain's part to dismiss the government. Given this perspective, the threat of force was a useful means of keeping the King from taking action against Nahas.

The stalemate between the Palace and the Wafd erupted again in early 1944 with a serious outbreak of malaria and food shortages in Upper Egypt. Both the Palace and the Opposition exploited this situation to move against the Wafd and the British. The malaria crisis put the Embassy in a difficult position. On the one hand, Britain blamed the Wafd Government for neglecting the developing situation and for the inefficient distribution of food. They needed to act against rumors on the street that the British were responsible for the problems. On the other hand, if they were too critical of the Wafd Government, they would further weaken their authority.[18] The British took a defensive position in the press both in Egypt and in London, with articles pointing out that Britain had offered medical assistance to deal with malaria that the Egyptian Government had refused, had warned of a possible malaria outbreak two years earlier and placing the blame for food shortages on

16 Minute by Scrivener, 25 Oct. 1943, FO371/35539.

17 Minute by Scrivener, 3 Dec. 1943, FO371/35540.

the poor distribution network of the Egyptian Government.[19] In this case, it was more important to defend Britain's reputation in Egypt than to support the Wafd government.[20]

Killearn complained to the Foreign Office that, as always, Britain was being blamed for everything that went wrong in Egypt, and the Palace was using the malaria crisis as a cover for challenging the Wafd on religious grounds based on the leadership of al-Azhar. Yet Killearn still felt that they should support the Wafd for three reasons: he did not see any alternative except a Palace-supported government; the Wafd had and would continue to support the war effort; and the Wafd "stood by us in the black days of 1942 and…we should stand as long as reasonably possible by those who have proved themselves our friends in the foulest of foul weather."[21] Smart, however, once again argued that they should relinquish their role of propping up the Wafd as soon as possible. Britain's apparently unconditional support of the Wafd Government could have a negative long-term affect on British interests in Egypt and stability in the country: "the

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[18] Killearn to FO, 24 Feb. 1944, FO371/41326.

[19] Press cuttings: "Fight Against Malaria in Egypt," in the *Times*, 28 Feb. 1944 and "Egypt has enough food, says Britain," in the *Egyptian Gazette*, 20 Feb. 1944, FO371/41327. The Publicity Section of the Embassy issued a press release on 19 February 1944 that placed responsibility on Egypt: "If local shortages occur these can only be due to failures in the system of distribution for which the British authorities are not responsible." The censor removed this sentence and the Government of Egypt objected to this placing of blame. Press release, British Embassy Publicity Section, 19 Feb. 1944, FO371/41327.

[20] Timothy Mitchell points out that the immediate malaria crisis might have been the result of lack of coordination on the part of the Egyptian government, but the root cause could be found in long-term British policies in Egypt: the war led to changes in shipping and transportation patterns that facilitated the spread of the new strain of malaria; the Aswan Dam was heightened and the resultant change in the Nile's floodwaters made Egypt dependent on artificial fertilizers, most of which it bought from Germany. The drop in fertilizer supplies due to the war led to a reduction in Egypt's food crops by up to a quarter, a situation further exacerbated by the growth in sugarcane production. Food shortages and chronic malnutrition made the population of Egypt more susceptible to malaria. Mitchell concludes: "Dams, blood-borne parasites, synthetic chemicals, mechanized war, and man-made famine coincided and interacted" to create the malaria crisis. Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techo-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 22. For the British response to the malaria crisis, see also Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser, Appendix 2, pp. 287-288.

[21] Killearn to FO, 1 March 1944, FO141/937.

danger of a continuance of the present situation is that the Wafd, in its struggle with the King, is sapping the bases of stability-the Army, the Police, officialdom, financial equilibrium, the Azhar, the educational institutions, the workers, respect for authority and vested interests."[22] The Wafd's policies and tactics were turning these "bases of stability" against the Government and the British and towards the Palace. Smart saw the Wafd, in the long-term, as a destabilizing force:

> the Wafd, to ensure its existence, must work for the overthrow of the present order of things, namely, the monarchical regime as represented by King Farouk. In this struggle all the stabilising forces of the country must be shaken by the Wafd offensive which, of course, is in the nature of self-defence. If the Wafd had behind it the sacred fire which leads revolutionary parties to overthrow outworn regimes, one might consider that such a movement was inevitable and even commendable. The trouble is that the Wafd is a worn out force, with a sacred fire no longer behind it, but propelled by a collection of interests, some deserving, others quite the reverse…It is inconceivable that such a Government will be able to run the country once the elements of cohesion in the country have been destroyed. Indeed, it is unlikely that any other Government would then be able to run the country.[23]

Smart did not think the Embassy should purposely work to have Nahas removed from office, but they should not support him longer than necessary. The question was, what type of issue would be the best pretext for allowing the Nahas Government to fall? Smart considered it of paramount importance that the Wafd Government should leave office over a dispute with the King on a purely internal issue, such as al Azhar or the Black Book, rather than an issue that directly involved Britain. If he left office on a conflict with the Embassy, Nahas could capitalize on this while out of office, and Smart considered that Nahas in opposition would be less troublesome if he was forced out on an internal issue: "When we come to the conclusion that the Wafd cannot be maintained

[22] Memorandum by Smart, 1 March 1944, FO141/937.

much longer in power, it is essential that we should manoeuvre so that King Farouk should take the initiative in dismissing Nahas rather than that Nahas should himself resign on any ground involving an issue between the Government and ourselves."[24]

The Foreign Office agreed with Smart's assessment.[25] Nahas's government would face the risk of being turned out of office twice in 1944, and both times the Embassy's response would be shaped by this set of criteria: the Wafd should fall on an internal issue that did not involve Britain. Along with that, it would need to happen at an opportune moment from the perspective of the war effort. As Shone pointed out, if the military situation developed in Britain's favor in the coming months, "we can better afford to experiment with something different in the way of a Govt; and if they go well, I should doubt whether the Palace could afford to make trouble for us."[26]

Scrivener visited Egypt in March 1944, and soon after his return to London noted that, as the war had moved farther away from Egypt, local discontent had shifted in focus from the Wafd to the British, and there was a general belief that Britain had long-term plans to take over Egypt. He observed:

> It is an extraordinary paradox that the country which saved Egypt from extinction and ruin in this war should now be threatened-if distantly-with an outbreak of popular fury engendered by the ineptitude and venality of an Egyptian administration. But there it is. The conclusion is that-from the purely local point of view-the sooner the Chiefs of Staff will permit us to disengage ourselves, at the

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[23] Minute by Smart, 9 March 1944, FO141 /937.

[24] Memorandum by Smart, 5 March 1944, FO141/937. In a statement that reveals just how superficial was the Embassy's attempt to avoid intervention in Egyptian affairs, Killearn pointed out in response that, regardless of the issue that would lead to the Wafd's dismissal, they would argue that they had only fallen from power because the British allowed them to do so, "Which will-or would-in fact be the truth and everyone would know it!" Minute by Killearn 7 March 1944, FO141/937.

[25] Minute by Peterson, 29 March 1944 and Minute by Scrivener, 29 March 1944, FO371/41327.

[26] Minute by Shone, 10 March 1944, FO 141/937.

> ultimate risk of some slight and transient political upheaval, from Egyptian internal politics, the better for Egypt and ourselves.[27]

While Scrivener was calling for British "disengagement" from internal Egyptian politics, Killearn was contemplating greater control. He asked Eden "whether we could afford to be faced with these perpetual embarrassments and whether we might not have to take a firmer line and assume some more direct control of Egypt." There were many objections to doing so, and it may not be practical politics, "But of course it would really be the best solution." Killearn's next observation offers real insight into Britain's decision-making process: "Nor, as a rule, do we take such drastic measures unless we are suddenly forced to do so. That in fact is how most of our big decisions have in the past been taken."[28] From Killearn's perspective at least, major decisions were made not due to long-term planning but as reactions to immediate developments.

This surprising suggestion, that Britain should take direct control of Egypt, was prompted by an equally surprising action on the part of Farouk. The King visited areas that were suffering from the malaria outbreak and Nahas, in response, made his own provincial visits which the Palace felt were "characterised by semi-Royal procedure and amounted to an encroachment on Royal prerogatives." These visits were, in the opinion of the Palace, just one indication of the "demagogic organization of the population by the

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[27] Appreciation of Egyptian Politics by Scrivener, 26 March 1944, FO371/41327. Peterson and Eden also weighed in on this discussion. Peterson sided with Smart and Scrivener, while Eden supported Killearn: Nahas should stay in office, "great though the follies are that he has committed. He is not our enemy, Farouk is; and I have no confidence in Hassanein." Minute by Peterson, 29 March 1944 and undated minute by Eden, FO371/41327.

[28] Killearn Diaries, 12 April 1944.

Wafd."[29] In response, the King handed Killearn a memorandum calling for a new government, suggesting that Hassanein, his own Chamberlain, should be appointed Prime Minister.[30] Killearn noted that while the King was friendly, "it is clear that His Majesty does not in the slightest degree appreciate that the war is still in the balance or that we need worry ourselves any further with the political stability of our base here in Egypt." In response, Killearn suggested to London that they be prepared to use force in Egypt until the war ended, although hopefully the threat would be sufficient. He conceded that this would be more difficult than in 1942, because Farouk was more popular and more cooperative and the army would resent this interference.[31]

Killearn's decision was based on the short-term expediency of the war. He and General Paget discussed "whether Nahas's administration is really worth backing further and whether to do so would not estrange the Egyptian people permanently. I said I was not over worried about that though there was of course that point of view. The only thing I really cared about was that whilst the war was in its present acute stage we should have stability here."[32] Smart, however, was much more concerned with the long-term effects of Britain's continued support of Nahas. The Wafd was courting both the Muslim Brotherhood and Young Egypt, "two fanatical xenophobe Muslim Societies," and was trying to organize the workers of Egypt. Farouk, on the other hand, was opposed to the politicization of the army and al Azhar and the Government's wasteful financial policies.

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29 Killearn to Eden, 27 June 1944, FO371/41329.

30 Farouk presented this document to Killearn without any warning. Peterson observed that Killearn was partially responsible for this: "If he had been in the habit of seeing the King from time to time as he ought to do this kind of thing could not happen." Minute by Peterson, 14 April 1944, FO371/41327.

31 Killearn to FO, 12 April 1944, FO141/937.

32 Memorandum by Killearn, 17 April 1944, FO141/937.

Smart concluded: "In fact, as regards the general administration of the country, at the present moment our interests and those of King Farouk are identical. We are both out for stability, for different reasons perhaps." While the Wafd could be dangerous in opposition, in power they were undermining Egypt's stability and losing their effectiveness: "We, in our position as semi-occupying Power, have everything to lose from a revolutionary movement conducted in Egypt by a worn out Party who will not eventually be able to deliver the goods to us in return for our support."[33] Not only was keeping the Wafd in power causing increased anti-British sentiment in Egypt, but it was undermining the value of the Wafd as a collaborative party.

Killearn's pro-active policy also faced opposition from the British military authorities and the Minister of State. As Lord Moyne explained to the Foreign Office, the military authorities opposed using force because "they consider the probable results would constitute a greater threat to the security of our base in Egypt and to the general war effort in the Middle East than any disturbances which might arise from the Wafd being out of office." The Egyptian army would oppose this action, and it might have an effect on other Arab states.[34] Killearn again responded that it was highly unlikely that Britain would actually have to resort to force. Farouk would most likely give in just as he did in 1943: "But what I did not like was going down and giving such advice if I knew that I had only an empty gun in my pocket." General Paget argued that they just did not

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[33] Memorandum by Smart, 17 April 1944, FO141/937.

[34] Lord Moyne to FO, 18 April 1944, FO371/41327.

have the troops available: "General Paget said he quite understood that angle but the fact was that the gun was definitely empty."[35]

Peterson at the Foreign Office felt that Killearn's proposal to use force if necessary to prevent the dismissal of Nahas's government was "both reckless and unjustifiable." Instead the Foreign Office suggested that elections be held.[36] Churchill, however, overrode the Foreign Office and supported Killearn: "His is a wise view and based on great experience…I think we should stand by our friends. The King is no friend of ours, but an intriguing despot embodying many of the worst Oriental vices." Churchill's decision was based partly on the larger war situation: "For the time being we should keep the King in play by much parley, during which the Greek flotilla and Brigade may be recalled to their duty, thus liberating the British forces concerned for the maintenance of order. Now, on the morrow of great military operations, we cannot have disorders in Egypt."[37] The War Cabinet supported Churchill's decision, using the example of the Black Book crisis to set a precedent. The War Cabinet:

> re-read the telegrams which had passed on a very similar occasion almost exactly a year ago. They recommend that all parties should re-read these telegrams. They show most clearly the quite needless fears entertained by the then Commanders-in-Chief, and the gloomy prophesies which were made by the military authorities. They also show the anxieties expressed by the then Minister of State, the decisions which were taken here to over-ride these points of view, and the happy results attained by firm action by His Majesty's Ambassador, not excluding the possible use of force.[38]

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35 Memorandum by Killearn, 17 April 1944, FO141/937.

36 Minute by Peterson, 14 April 1944, FO371/41327.

37 Churchill to Cadogan, 16 April 1944, FO371/41328. This issue was presented directly to Churchill rather than to Eden because the Foreign Secretary was not in London at the time. Minute by Cadogan, 14 April 1944, FO371/41327.

38 FO to Cairo, 20 April 1944, FO371/41328.

The War Cabinet recommended that "the Commanders-in-Chief should take all necessary steps to make sure that their forces are marshalled and ready to give support to the Ambassador should he require it."[39] The situation was further complicated by the Greek Mutiny, and Churchill advised Killearn to be sure that the military authorities had enough troops to deal with the Greek situation as well as Egypt.[40]

Killearn had expected London to decide against the threat of force, so he was pleasantly surprised by the instructions he received.[41] However, as in 1943 he also privately expressed some doubts: "I hope to heaven that I am right in having advocated this strong line as I have done. Personally I think I am but I am once more surrounded by many doubting Thomases."[42] After receiving London's response, the Embassy laid out contingency plans in case Farouk dismissed Nahas's Government, including plans for Farouk's deposition with Prince Mohamed Aly to take his place.[43]

Killearn presented the War Cabinet message to Farouk, who opposed the idea of elections. Farouk then asked a question to be passed on to London that went to the heart

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[39] Ibid.

[40] FO to Cairo, 18 April 1944, FO371/41328.

[41] Killearn Diaries, 18 April 1944. The extent of Churchill's confidence in Killearn is demonstrated by a personal telegram he sent to the Ambassador: "Let me know exactly what you would like to do, and what you think can be done. It is curious how so far, exactly what happened last year has been repeated. However the Palace may have learned mischief by experience." FO to Cairo, 20 April 1944, FO371/41328. Killearn observed in his diary that these telegrams were "I think I may say not only satisfactory but almost embarrassingly flattering to myself." Killearn Diaries, 21 April 1944. In this telegram Churchill also asked Killearn if General Stone was still showing a defeatist attitude. Killearn recorded his response in his diary: "I must admit I would be happier just at this juncture with someone more robust and whose heart was more in the operation than Stone. Acting on this Paget has received an order to turf Stone out right away." Killearn Diaries, 24 April 1944.

[42] Ibid., 18 April 1944.

[43] These plans were developed at a meeting between Shone, Smart, Besly, and Amin Osman. If dismissed, Nahas would send a note to Farouk protesting the "unconstitutional acts of the Palace back to 1937" and a copy would be sent to the Embassy asking for British support, if necessary by force, to which the Embassy would agree. The government would then declare Farouk deposed and the Crown Prince the

of the conflict: "Is the British Government prepared to choose definitely between the King of Egypt and Nahas Pasha staying in power?" The King said he would wait to take action until he had a reply to this question. Killearn suggested to the Foreign Office that they should not answer this question, but push the King to make a "definite reply…in regard to his intentions."[44] Peterson agreed and predicted that Farouk would defy them and dismiss the Government. Rather than using force against the King to depose him, he suggested they wait and see what developed: "In Egypt he who knows how to wait gets his way in the end."[45] Churchill agrees they should not respond to the King's question, but let Farouk take the next step. At the same time, they should prepare to use force: "We must not be frightened about using tanks, and the military should begin gathering 40 or 50 of them within easy reach of Cairo."[46]

In the end, Farouk backed down and decided to leave the Wafd Government in power.[47] Scrivener noted that this was a positive development, as they wanted to keep things quiet in Egypt, but Britain would be held even more responsible for the actions of the Wafd Government: "When the next crisis occurs, I hope that the general war situation will be such that we can stand aside and enable responsibility to return to the King."[48] Yet once the crisis ended, Killearn resolved to speak with both Nahas and Farouk,

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new King. Farouk would be removed from Egypt. It is significant that Nahas, through Amin Osman, was well aware of these preparations. Report by Shone, 20 April 1944, FO141/937.

44 Killearn to FO, 22 April 1944, FO141/937. The Ambassador had doubts about this line of action though, noting in his diary after talking to Moyne: "I find that he and my own staff are, to my mind, rather pawky and unimaginative which means that they are not prepared to endorse my possibly very rash ideas as regards basic policy in Egypt. Who knows but what they may be right?!" Killearn Diaries, 22 April 1944.

45 Minute by Peterson, 22 April 1944, FO371/41328.

46 Churchill to Cadogan, 23 April 1944, Fo371/41328.

47 Killearn to FO, 24 April 1944, FO141/937.

48 Minute by Scrivener, 25 April 1944, FO371/41328.

impressing on the Prime Minister that they were only supporting him because they wanted a quiet time in Egypt during a crucial stage of the war and urging the two leaders to cooperate. Killearn lamented that urging these two leaders to cooperate "resembles mixing oil and vinegar—and one must not look for too much. Still, if we can tide over the next few critical months of the war, that in itself will be something of an achievement."[49]

Reflecting back on the crisis, Killearn observed that it was the third time they had intervened to support the Wafd. He felt this was justified, as Nahas had delivered during the most challenging days of the war in the Western Desert, and "I still believe they fulfil the two essentials of sound and legitimate British war policy in Egypt-(a) a Government loyally devoted to the treaty and (b) with a sufficient majority effectively to implement it." But Nahas would have to "fight his own battles" in future. Nahas argued that he would have "had it out" with Farouk earlier if he had not been trying to protect British war interests and next time, in Killearn's view, they should let him do so. Britain may have to intervene to restore order when this happens, "But we would be doing so on a clear-cut issue: and no longer in the guise of supporting one particular internal part."[50]

Each time the British intervened on behalf of the Wafd, they ended up undermining the very party they were trying to support. In the case of the malaria crisis of 1944, the Wafd's prestige was hurt by the fact that the debate about the future of the Government occurred between Farouk and the British, without consulting the

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[49] Killearn to FO, 25 April 1944, FO141/937. Churchill's response to Killearn's comment was: "Do not be worried about mixing oil and vinegar. It is always done in any decent salad. You should make Nahas feel that we have supported him because stable life of Egypt is important to the Allied cause and that if he became a cause of trouble himself, we might quite easily lean the other way, our object being always peace and freedom." Killearn Diaries, 29 April 1944.

[50] Killearn to Eden, 4 May 1944, FO371/41329.

Government at all.[51] Two legs of the three-legged stool were deciding the fate of the third.

Farouk may have backed down for the moment, but he then began attacking both the Government and the British. Before departing Egypt to spend his leave in South Africa during late summer, Killearn had a discussion on general policy with Shone, the Charge d'Affaires, and Amin Osman. Even when the war ended in Europe, Eygpt would be vital to the war effort in the Pacific and "it was of the utmost importance to disabuse the Egyptians of the dangerous ideas they were harbouring and not least of the feeling that the time was now ripe for raising awkward questions of all kinds." He mentioned the rumors that the Palace would try to get rid of Nahas while Killearn was out of the country and repeated what he had told Hassanein, that "British policy in Egypt as elsewhere was corporate and not individual and in an emergency His Majesty's Government would act with the same promptitude and firmness whether I was at the local helm or not."[52] By making this statement to the Wafd's intermediary in the presence of the Charge d'Affaires as well as to the Palace Chamberlain, Killearn was in effect telling the Government of Egypt and the Palace in no uncertain terms that Shone would act with full authority in his absence.

Despite this warning, a serious crisis erupted soon after Killearn's departure.[53] While traveling to a mosque in Cairo on the last Friday in Ramadan, Farouk noticed that,

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[51] Killearn to Eden, 27 June 1944, FO371/41329.

[52] Killearn to FO, 6 Sept. 1944, FO141/937.

[53] Not only was Killearn out of the country when this crisis erupted, but so was Amin Osman, the main intermediary between the Wafd and the Embassy. Amin Osman was in Jerusalem at the time, and the Minister of State arranged for Hamilton, a member of his staff and former member of the Oriental

next to the streamers proclaiming "Long life to King Farouk," were streamers stating "Long life to Nahas Pasha." The King told Ghazzali, the Director of Public Security, to remove the offensive banners. In response, the Minister of the Interior, acting at the direction of the Government, suspended Ghazzali for complying with the King's demand.[54] As Amin Osman explained, the King could not constitutionally give a direct order to an official and Ghazzali should have consulted the Minister of the Interior before complying.[55] Britain had an interest in this matter, because Ghazzali had been "an extremely staunch friend" and "very valuable" to the British military. For the British officials who believed in standing up for their friends, they were now faced with a situation in which one collaborator, Ghazzali, was being undermined by another, Nahas, and they would be forced to choose between them.

How should the British respond to this situation? Shone, as acting head of the Embassy, felt that they should let Nahas's government fall. There was the possibility that a strong, united opposition could now take office, but given Britain's forceful response to previous crises, he did not think that Farouk "would now dare, even if he wished, to range himself against us on major issues." The Wafd in opposition could potentially cause unrest, but the army and police were loyal to the King and would support any government he put in place. They had supported Nahas long enough and he could not

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Secretariat at the Embassy, to encourage him to intervene with Nahas. Nahas agreed to wait to take further action until Amin Osman returned to Cairo on September 20th. Shone to FO, 18 Sept. 1944, FO371/41332.

54 Shone to FO, 15 Sept. 1944, FO141/937.

55 There were larger issues behind this seemingly trivial incident. The personal animosity between Nahas and Farouk had been growing for a long time, with numerous personal slights on both sides. Shone to FO, 22 Sept. 1944, FO141/937. As for Ghazzali's role as scapegoat, Palace informants told the Embassy that the Minister of the Interior complained that Ghazzali was "too friendly with the British and too prone to seek advice of this Embassy in connexion with his official duties," and he had been accused of

charge the British with failing to support him: "we are not bound to support him on any issue which we consider to be bad or on which we are not fully taken into his confidence."[56] The Foreign Office agreed, and instructed Shone: "Our views seem to have been made abundantly clear to both parties in this melodramatic dispute. You may now sit back."[57]

The Embassy's old tendency to support the Wafd still held. Shone observed that, with conflicts between the Palace and Government, "we have always acted as honest brokers in the past and such mediation is expected of us." He suggested they try to work out a compromise because if Nahas's Government fell, he would blame Britain for not supporting him.[58] In the end, the Foreign Office held firm. Scrivener authorized Shone to act in a "personal capacity" but "we must, I submit, insist on HMG's being kept aloof. Nahas Pasha blundered into this impasse without giving us any warning, still less consulting us; and I do not see how he can maintain that we have 'let him down.'"[59] On October 8 Nahas received his dismissal and Ahmed Maher was appointed the new Prime Minister.[60]

The Wafd held office for two and a half years during World War II. The British actively intervened, to the point of threatening to depose the King, three times in that period to maintain the Wafd in office despite charges of corruption and repeated conflicts with the King. So why did Nahas's Government eventually fall in September 1944? The

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misusing public funds, so the Government might have wanted to dismiss him anyway. Shone to FO, 19 Sept. 1944, FO371/41332. For the Ghazzali crisis, see Nasser Appendix 3, pp. 289-291.

56 Shone to FO, 19 Sept. 1944, FO141/937.

57 FO to Cairo, 23 Sept. 1944, FO371/41333.

58 Shone to FO, 27 Sept. 1944, FO371/41333.

59 Minute by Eden and Minute by Scrivener, 27 Sept. 1944, FO371/41333.

Ghazzali crisis met the criteria that Smart had laid out earlier that year for the ideal change of government. The war situation was not urgent in the sense of requiring absolute calm in Egypt—they could risk whatever resulted. It was also an issue that was purely between the King and the Government, that could not be presented as a nationalist question or an anti-British one. The British had stood by their Wafdist friends for two and a half years, until the situation was ripe to replace them.

These episodes demonstrate the interplay of local politics and the British war effort. For the British, the requirements of the war were of paramount importance, and trumped any long-term considerations. The aim in Egypt was to maintain a quiet time for as long as possible during the war, and force would be used only if necessary to preserve the peace. These crises also reveal various aspects of Britain's relationship with its local collaborators in Egypt, for example the importance British officials placed on not being seen to be letting down their friends. Yet this support ultimately undermined the very "friend" they were trying to bolster, as the Wafd lost popularity for being too closely tied to Britain. Despite Killearn's attempts to work through intermediaries and thereby keep his intervention in the background, it was very much public knowledge.

These episodes highlight the often complex relationships between the officials in London and the "men on the spot" at the Embassy. Killearn had the support of both Eden and Churchill, against the opposition of the military authorities, the Minister of State, and, at times, his own Oriental Counsellor. Each group of officials had its own perspective on events. At times, the Foreign Office criticized the Embassy for being too

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60 Cairo to FO, 8 Oct. 1944, FO141/937.

closely drawn into local disputes and dramatizing the conflicts.[61] The military authorities were alarmed at the prospect of having their troops put on parade. The long-term stability of Britain's position in Egypt concerned Smart while Killearn prioritized keeping things quiet for the immediate war period. Through all these conflicting interests and priorities, a policy emerged of supporting the Wafd until the war situation was such that their cooperation was no longer necessary.

The wartime crises over the Wafd government reveal the extent to which Killearn was convinced of the need to remove Farouk. The British did not want the monarchy dissolved, as they believed it had a stabilizing influence in the country, but they did consider changing the occupant. As Killearn explained to the British military authorities, "a change of incumbent of the Throne was a very different thing to its abolition which I had never had in mind, (the Throne being an important asset to us if properly run)."[62] It is striking that, despite his commitment to removing Farouk and the support he received from Eden and Churchill, Killearn never got his secret wish to see the King unseated while he was still Ambassador.[63] Although the Embassy portrayed the King as weak and ineffective, he and his advisers were able to play the game well enough, and long enough, to survive the war.

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61 As Peterson complained in 1944, "I wish the Embassy could learn to take a more detached view of these bickerings and be a little less inclined to confront us with a crisis." Minute by Peterson, 19 Sept. 1944, FO371/41332.

62 Killearn to FO, 21 April 1944, FO141/952.

63 Killearn assumed that eventually there would be a showdown with the Palace and confessed to Eden in 1944: "I rather hope-selfishly perhaps-that this may happen in my time here. For I should like, as a matter of pure personal sentiment and romance, to see this drama played out to its final act." Killearn to Eden, 17 Aug. 1944, FO371/41331.

The Egyptian Opposition and the Rhetoric of Violence

After 1943, with the conclusion of the war in the Western Desert, Britain faced renewed opposition from within Egypt itself. Egyptian political and religious groups increasingly used the threat of less formalized types of violence, such as public protests, riots, assassinations, and general unrest. The rhetoric of these protests was no longer against the government in power, but against British influence in the country. The Embassy dated this new offensive to a series of speeches by Opposition leaders at Menoufia on June 1, 1943.[64] Ahmed Maher, who would succeed Nahas as Prime Minister, announced: "we have returned to the past days of occupation and protectorate…The English are colonizers and are now depending on a dishonest Government. Our struggle is against foreign administration." He then compared Britain to Germany: "The Germans who are the enemies of Democracy placed at Norway a Quisling, and the English gave us on the 4th of February a Govt. headed by an Egyptian Quisling, supporting him just as the Germans did at Norway. I see no difference between the two conducts." [65] The Opposition leaders took to the offensive again in November 1943, presenting a petition to the King. Not only did it call for the end to martial law and censorship but, foreshadowing Egypt's post-war demands, it also called for the

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[64] A report got back to Smart that two of the Opposition leaders, Ahmed Maher and Heykal, stated that they had taken this anti-British attitude because Killearn "had attached himself completely to the Wafd." In the past the Embassy maintained relations with Opposition leaders while they were out of power. In this case, not only did Killearn refuse to see them, but there had not been any social occasions at the Embassy when Opposition leaders might meet with the Embassy staff. Smart's response was that the Ambassador did not refuse to see individual Opposition leaders, only when they came as a group to present protests. He suggested that the Embassy hold "a teaparty or two" to try and remedy this situation. Minute by Smart, 23 June 1943, FO141/855.

[65] Translated report of speeches made by Opposition leaders at Menufia, 1 June 1943, submitted to the Embassy by Ghazzali, 3 June 1943, FO141/855.

withdrawal of foreign troops, complete Egyptian control of the Canal, Egyptian unity with the Sudan, and a place for Egypt at the Peace Conference.[66]

The end of 1943 also saw renewed protests and small-scale violence.[67] King Farouk was injured in an automobile accident in November 1943. In an eerie echo of the protests after King Ghazi's car accident in Iraq in 1939, the Embassy received reports of anti-British violence in the provinces aimed at British residents and Egyptian collaborators. At first the protests were anti-French, in response to the situation in Lebanon, but they turned anti-British in response to rumors that Britain was behind the car accident and was holding the King hostage at a British military hospital. Students and workers held demonstrations in support of the King, British propaganda displays in the provinces were vandalized, and Killearn's own niece, a NAAFI driver, was stoned as well as a number of other British officers. According to British reports Egyptian authorities in the provinces did nothing to stop these events. While the protests were widespread, the violence was isolated, but even so it worried Embassy officials, who observed that the situation required "careful watching."[68] Such demonstrations were a way for the various interests in Egypt to show their power and influence, and they appropriated popular sentiment to do so. The Embassy interpreted these protests as a sign of growing discontent with the Wafd administration and the fact that in the eyes of the Egyptian public, the British were responsible for its maintenance in power and therefore its shortcomings. Opposition leaders had warned the Embassy that keeping a corrupt

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66 A copy was forwarded to Killearn and they planned to submit it to the Allied leaders at the Cairo Conference. "Note addressée aux représentants de Grande bretagne, Etats-Unis, Russie et Chine Reunis En Conference Au Caire," 29 Nov. 1943, FO141/910.

67 Killearn to FO, 28 Nov. 1943, FO371/35540.

Government in office would lead to unrest, and "While partisan prophecies have to be discounted, it is obvious that there is a very large amount of dissatisfaction with us among the students, intelligentsia and upper classes on account of our support of the Wafd Government."[69]

These small scale, isolated acts of violence and the growing rhetoric of violence and resistance employed by opposition groups in Egypt impressed on British officials the need for restraint. As General Stone had observed, even small-scale opposition or "non-cooperation" threatened to undermine Britain's position in the country and interfere with the war effort. The British took these demonstrations seriously and formulated their response under the shadow of the unrest and violence that had followed World War I, what they called "the spectre of 1919." Local leaders capitalized on these fears of an outbreak of violence on the "Arab street."[70] Killearn pointed out that Ahmed Maher and Nokrashi, who had played prominent roles in the 1919 Revolution, were still prominent figures in the opposition:

> They know perfectly well that the Egyptian masses cannot be brought out in violent manifestations against the British on purely nationalist issues. They must remember that the uprising of 1919 was only rendered possible by the material grievances which the fellaheen had against the British, e.g., the requisitioning of labour, forage, animals, &c….
>
> It is clear that the economic unsoundness of the situation brought about in Egypt by our military expenditure and consumption, and by the stoppage of imports, contains just those possibilities for the agitator which were such decisive factors

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68 For accounts of these protests see FO141/855.

69 Minute by Smart, 21 Dec. 1943, FO141/855. Killearn observed of the participants: "Demonstrations of students and workmen and loyal pilgrims to Quassasin have been continuous during the past weeks and have revealed that the Palace is now able to organise demonstrations among quarters which hitherto have been used for that purpose by Wafd, e.g. railway, arsenal and Government printing workers." Killearn to FO, 28 Nov. 1943, FO371/35540.

70 Killearn to FO, 29 Aug. 1944, FO141/987.

> in 1919. This situation is aggravated by the corruption and incompetence of the Egyptian supply and other financial and economic services, whose sins are already being visited on the heads of the British, accused of keeping a corrupt Administration in power.[71]

If either the Opposition or the Wafd successfully exploited the fellaheen against the British the situation would be even more serious than in 1919 due to the proliferation of weapons from the war in the Western Desert: "In 1919 the fellaheen were armed with little more than clubs. Now they would be able to muster quite a considerable number of men armed with modern rifles."[72]

In many ways Egypt was better off economically than other parts of the Middle East, but Egypt's importance as a base and its influence over the Arab world justified preferential treatment in Killearn's eyes: "It is very far from my wish to cry wolf prematurely or to give any impression of being panicky: but there can be no shadow of doubt that there exists already an ugly side to affairs here in Egypt: and that conditions of want and privation prevail which may very easily lead ultimately to gravest form of political and internal trouble-compare what happened in 1919."[73] There were important differences in the situation from that in 1919. The Egyptian political forces were more divided and the Wafd, which had led the anti-British campaign in 1919, was now a collaborator. The economic issues had also changed, but there was the same possibility that political groups could seize on unrest with the economy among the general population and channel it into anti-British agitation. As Killearn explained, the two

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[71] Killearn to Eden, 27 June 1944, FO371/41329.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Killearn to FO, personal for Eden, 29 Aug. 1944, FO141/987. This argument was well received at the Foreign Office. As one official observed: "It amounts to suggesting that a shipload of supplies now

biggest demands in 1944 were for the evacuation of foreign troops and Egyptian control of the Sudan. Britain was unlikely to give in on either of these points, but that made it all the more important to ensure that no other points of contention and complaint, such as economic problems, could be capitalized on by the political parties.[74]

In February 1944, the various Opposition parties issued a joint manifesto. It is useful to examine this document, which was by no means unique in the rhetoric employed, because it reflects the tenor of Egyptian opinion at the time, capitalized on British fears of a return to 1919, and raised issues that would preoccupy the British for the remainder of the war.[75] The document stated that the opposition was not fighting the Wafd, but "The fight is against the British Imperialists who have renewed their ambitions and who cannot be satisfied or convinced by any means whatsoever." The government in power was merely a figurehead for the Embassy: "The Ministry governs in the name of the Ambassador, and relies upon his support and finally obeys his orders." Given this situation, the opposition parties were joining together, while maintaining their individual identities. Britain had, in effect, reimposed the Protectorate which called for drastic action: "There is no alternative for Egypt but to use the policy of the 'executioner' and of the struggler." The opposition repeated their demands for treaty revision and the release of internees and until these demands were met, it was "the duty of the Country to fight against the present regime and its supporters." Egypt was now in the same situation they

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would possibly save us from having to send several shiploads of troops and guns later on." Minute by Coverley-Price, 7 Sept. 1944, FO371/41331.

74 Killearn to FO, 29 Aug. 1944, Fo141/987.

75 This document was not formally presented to the Embassy. Amin Osman took a copy from the Liberal Constitutional Club and gave it to Smart, and the Embassy got a copy of the English translation from the Police. Minute by Smart, 11 Feb. 1944, FO141/937.

as 1919, and the opposition called for a return of the spirit of the 1919 revolution: "We are now calling you to the struggle…Every-one who wishes to fight with nationalism and honour and virility should come forward and the Fatherland will be grateful to him…God blesses and rewards the strugglers."[76] A second declaration by the National Front, issued in March, reflected a recognition of the patron-client relationship between the Embassy and the Government in power: "The British Policy is no more unknown to you. She is quite at ease in realising her aims, thanks to her British representative and her Egyptian Agent. The Agent gets his pay in power and wealth, and England gets all Egypt as if it were a spoil of the war."[77]

Egyptian wartime politics after the Wafd

Despite the extreme efforts the Embassy went through to keep the Wafd in office, when it did eventually fall from power the Embassy accepted it without a whimper. As Killearn philosophically reflected: "Taking the broad view I think that probably was no bad thing and it certainly was all to the good that it happened whilst we were away in South Africa. So far Nahas has been much less bitter than I had expected and with a bit of luck one hopes that he will continue to exercise restraint. If he will only realise it, he and his party now have a good chance to put their house in order and to recuperate for later

[76]Translation of National Front Opposition Manifesto, 11 Feb. 1944, FO141/937. This statement was signed by the main Opposition leaders: Ahmed Maher, Mohamed Hussein Haikal, Makram Ebeid, and Mohamed Hafez Ramadan. Killearn's response to seeing Ahmed Maher's signature was that perhaps they should cut off the L2,000 a year they were paying to him. Smart suggested they wait before taking this action, as it might lead Ahmed Maher to take up a more extreme position. It is interesting that the British were paying one of the Opposition leaders. Minute by Killearn, 12 February 1944 and Minute by Smart, 13 February 1944, FO141/937.

[77] Translation of pamphlet "The Second Call issued by the National Front on Thursday, 23rd March 1944," FO141/937.

events."[78] The Embassy did, however, extend its policy of "standing by our friends" to the Wafd even after its removal from office. Killearn was concerned by the apparent "policy of victimization" that the new government had undertaken against the former one.[79] With Foreign Office support, he pressed the new Prime Minister to refrain from bringing charges against the Wafd administration, in particular Nahas and Amin Osman.[80]

Nahas's Wafd Government was succeeded by a new coalition government drawn from the Opposition parties, led by Ahmed Maher, the Saadist party leader. The British generally considered Ahmed Maher to be an able politician, and they had only opposed him taking office earlier in the war because he had been implicated in the Stack murder in the 1920s.[81] The new Prime Minister assured Britain of his intentions to honor the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and cooperate on the war effort, but the Embassy was unsettled by this change from an openly cooperative government to one that was untested: "we inevitably moved on to more uncertain ground-uncertain both as regards the extent of the collaboration which we should receive from the new Cabinet and as regards the Cabinet's ability to deal with an internal situation which Hassanein Pasha has described to me as 'a mess.'"[82]

The fall of the Wafd government led to a reorganization of political power in Egypt. On the one hand, King Farouk reasserted his influence behind the scenes ; the

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78 Killearn Diaries, 1 Jan. 1945.

79 Killearn to FO, 14 Nov. 1944 and Shone to FO, 8 Nov. 1944, FO371/41335.

80 Killearn to FO, 8 Feb. 1945, FO371/45917.

81 Sir Lee Stack Pasha was the Sirdar and Governor-General of the Sudan and he was assassinated in 1924.

82 Shone to FO, 23 Oct. 1944, FO141/937.

Palace leg of the three-legged stool was in the ascendant. Smart warned: the King "is now the power in the land and unless and until a Wafd Government returns to power, the behaviour towards us of Egypt's governments will be dictated in essentials by King Farouk.[83] The new Prime Minister, however, tried to avoid being drawn too far under the influence of the Palace, maintaining his independence of action.[84] On the other hand, the new government was riven by divisions among the various political parties involved, each vying for influence. The Embassy believed that Ahmed Maher was committed to supporting the treaty and the Allied war effort, but was unsure as to whether or not he had the power to impose these plans. If he proved unable to control a politically-divided parliament Britain could be faced with the raising of a number of embarrassing issues, such as treaty revision and the Sudan, potentially leading to even greater Palace intervention in politics. This was not as dangerous a threat in late 1944 given the recession of the war from Egypt. With characteristic paternalism, Killearn argued that "we can afford to let the children play their games to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction during the present lull." Yet once the war switched focus to the Far East Egypt would again become a crucial base for supplies and troops movements, which might necessitate further British intervention.[85]

One of Ahmed Maher's first acts as Prime Minister was to release a number of Egyptian prisoners detained on political grounds by the Wafd government, including his brother, former Prime Minister Ali Maher, and the former Wafdist official, Makram

83 Memorandum by Smart, 30 Oct. 1944, FO141/937.
84 Memorandum by Smart, 17 Nov. 1944, FO141/937.
85 Killearn to FO, 29 December 1944, FO371/45916.

Ebeid. [86] The Embassy was concerned that Ali Maher might try to regain his former position in Egyptian politics.[87] As for Makram, Nahas had arrested him earlier in 1944 for his inflammatory speeches and for holding political meetings. Upon his appointment as Minister of Finance in the new Ahmed Maher government, Makram undertook a campaign to discredit the Wafd for corruption and nepotism now that it was out of power and brought charges against Nahas.[88]

The British had supported the Wafd in power for so long partly out of fear as to what the majority party might do in opposition. Having been put in office through British intervention they had a certain obligation to cooperate with British authorities; while out of power they would be free to challenge British demands. The Wafd party proved these fears to be well founded after it left office in 1944. The Embassy traced the large-scale December 1944 student demonstrations against British policy in the Sudan, with an estimated 15,000-16,000 students involved, back to the Wafd. [89] The Wafd also actively opposed the campaign for an Egyptian declaration of war on the grounds that Killearn had assured the Wafd in November 1942 that Egypt would be allowed to participate in any peace conferences without a declaration. The Wafd argued that Britain was making "a declaration of war the price of entering the Peace Conference."[90]

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86 Killearn to Eden, Annual Review for 1944, 4 May 1945, FO371/45921.

87 Smart, in a revealing comment about the changing nature of Anglo-Egyptian collaboration, suggested a moderate response to Ali Maher's overtures: "In the past it has often happened that Egyptians who have been strafed by us have turned out to be good collaborators with us. On general grounds, therefore, I would not be prepared to recommend that we should forever close the door against the return of Ali Maher to the political scene." Minute by Smart, 31 March 1945, FO141/1028.

88 Killearn to FO, 14 Nov. 1944 and Shone to FO, 8 Nov. 1944, FO371/41335.

89 Killearn to FO, 23 Dec. 1944, FO371/41335.

90 Killearn to FO, summary of Wafd manifesto, 25 Feb. 1945, FO371/45918. This public statement was particularly galling to the Embassy: "it was really absurd that on the one hand we should be trying to protect the Wafd against prosecution and that the Wafd, on the other hand, should conduct an

The fall of the Wafd had serious implications for Killearn's policy of maintaining relations with the Egyptian government through intermediaries, as it signaled Amin Osman's fall as well.[91] Killearn's system was further undermined by the serious illness of Hassanein, the Palace Chamberlain who had effectively served as intermediary between the Embassy and the Palace throughout the war. A new intermediary emerged in Abdul Fattah Amr Pasha, recently appointed Egyptian Minister to the Embassy in London. In a meeting with the Oriental Counsellor, Amr informed Smart that Farouk asked him to delay his departure for London and "had intimated to him that he (His Majesty) would like Amr to stay here to be an official link with the Embassy during the illness of Hassanein." Smart did not consider him to be a "heavy-weight" but he was "honest and extremely pro-British…we must have some link of this sort now that Hassanein is out of the picture."[92] Amr's new role as intermediary did not escape public notice in Egypt: one Palace official informed Amr that the rumor circulating was that he was "wearing the coat of Amin Osman."[93] Amr did prove his worth, and upon his departure in April 1945 to take up his post as Egyptian Minister in London, Killearn reported that "We have been

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agitation in the country which is bound to stir up bad feelings against us." Killearn to FO, 26 Feb. 1945, FO371/45918.

91 Echoing the opposition pro-British officials faced when Ali Maher's government came to power in 1939, Wafdist officials who had cooperated with Britain were removed from office after the Wafd fell in 1944. This manifested itself in the social realm as well as the political. Amin Osman was up for election as President of the Anglo-Egyptian Union, a non-political social organization, and while all the British members voted for him, the Egyptian members opposed him and he lost the election. Once again, the Embassy felt obliged to prevent "undue personal victimization" of its supporters. Shone to FO, 8 Nov. 1944, FO371/41335. Even while removed from his position of influence, Amin Osman found ample opportunity to use his involvement in various charitable pro-British organizations as a pretext for continued meetings at the Embassy. Killearn Diaries, 21 Nov. 1944.

92 Memorandum by Smart, 11 Nov. 1944, FO141/971. Amr was a champion squash player and had been educated in England. Killearn noted that "In my talks with him I was always very frank for I felt I was talking practically to an Englishman with the same background of principles and ideas." Killearn Diaries, 31 March 1945.

93 Killearn to FO, 13 Jan. 1945, FO371/45916.

able, with his help and through his intermediary, to dispose of quite a number of teasing questions without having to bring our big artillery into action."[94]

Although removed from office and his position as intermediary between the Wafd and Embassy, Amin Osman did not withdraw from public life. In spring 1945 he proposed the formation of a political party with the support of the Old Victorians Club. He described it as "a non-political Youth Movement": "The idea of the Movement was to promote more practical conceptions of Egyptian citizenship, to wean Egyptians from narrow anti-foreign conceptions of nationalism and to promote cooperation with foreigners, though on lines advantageous to Egyptians."[95] The movement was publicly announced in August 1945 as the Rabita el-Nahda (Reform League), a "non-party" but not "non-political" movement for internal reform. Amin Osman claimed 3,000 members in summer 1945, but the movement received a poor reception in the Egyptian press. The Embassy, while encouraging the sentiments of the movement, decided to avoid being too closely associated with it because it might be interpreted as a British ploy.[96]

When Ahmed Maher became Prime Minister in 1944, he raised the issue of an Egyptian declaration of war so that Egypt could qualify to participate in the San

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94 Amr suggested to Killearn that they continue to use him as a channel to communicate with Farouk while he was in London. The Ambassador, taking his policy of using intermediaries to a new level, told the Foreign Office that he thought this was a useful suggestion. Killearn to FO, 27 March 1945, FO371/45920. Scrivener, however, pointed out that Farouk would most likely try to use Amr's position in London to bypass the Embassy in Cairo and speak directly to the Foreign Office. Minute by Scrivener, 1 April 1945, FO371/45920. He also noted that this labyrinthine proposition, that the Embassy in Cairo should keep in contact with the Egyptian King through the Egyptian Ambassador in London was "a melancholy commentary on the relations between King Farouk and the Embassy. Direct contact between King and Ambassador is, by implication, ruled out." Minute by Scrivener, 7 April 1945, FO371/45920.

95 Killearn to Eden, 25 April 1945, FO371/45920.

96 Killearn Diaries, 15 Aug. 1945; Weekly Political and Economic Report, 30 Aug. 1945 and Farquhar to FO, 7 Sept. 1945, FO371/45932.

Francisco conference in April.[97] This proposal faced strong opposition within Egypt, and on February 24, 1945 Ahmed Maher was assassinated while leaving a secret session of the Chamber of Deputies to discuss the issue.[98] Mahmud Nokrashi, Ahmed Maher's successor as Prime Minister, succeeded in passing the declaration of war on February 26, 1945 just in time for Egypt to participate in the San Francisco Convention.[99]

Nokrashi, was an able politician but potentially dangerous to British interests.[100] Killearn painted a particularly unflattering image of the new Prime Minister, describing him as "a narrow, pig-headed, hair-splitting obstinate schoolmaster! With no vision, no real statesmanship."[101] Killearn soon concluded that he could not work with Nokrashi's government, partly because he was unwilling to maintain relations with the Embassy on Killearn's terms as his predecessors had. Nahas and the Wafd had their weaknesses, but "with them I had always been able to discuss matters informally and generally get an agreed basis of settlement before officially broaching a question. Moreover we had practically always got what we wanted, both in large things and in small, to our mutual satisfaction and content." Although put in place by the King, Killearn had been on good terms with Ahmed Maher: "We understood one another and could meet and exchange ideas in the best possible of moods and an atmosphere of mutual understanding and collaboration." By contrast, Killearn lamented that Nokrashi's government was unwilling

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97 Killearn Diaries, 17 and 22 Feb. 1945.

98 Killearn to FO, 24 Feb. 1945, FO141/1051. In a case of tragic irony, the assassin was Mahmoud Issawi, a member of the Watanist party who had been interned by the Wafd and released by Ahmed Maher himself as part of his amnesty program on coming to office. Bowker to Bevin, Annual Review for 1945, 5 March 1946, FO403/469.

99 Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser, 49

100 Minute by Scrivener, 25 Feb. 1945, FO371/45918.

101 Killearn to Campbell, personal, 14 April 1945, FO371/45920.

to discuss issues informally to work out preliminary agreements, as he had been able to do with Nahas. Trying to do so would "only give the present crowd the chance to strike a nationalistic and pettifogging attitude, thus condemning in advance any prospect of a solution by settlement by common agreement out of court."[102]

Part of Killearn's problem was that he did not have a reliable intermediary with the new government. Amin Osman had allowed Killearn to consult closely with Nahas without being in public contact. Hassanein and Amr enabled Killearn to keep in contact with the Palace and exert influence on the King without meeting directly, which had been particularly useful because Ahmed Maher's government was considered to be a Palace government. Without such an intermediary he risked the danger of appearing to go above the Government's head in discussing issues with the Palace that really fell under the Government's purview.[103] Nokrashi refused to play this game.

Given his frustration with Nokrashi's unwillingness to cooperate, Killearn began a campaign to remove him from power, raising the issue with the Foreign Office in May 1945. He justified this suggestion on the basis that, with issues such as treaty revision and the future of the Suez Canal on the horizon, it was in Britain's interest to have a more

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[102] Killearn to FO, 31 March 1945, FO371/45920.

[103] Killearn to FO, 18 April 1945, FO371/45920. The Foreign Office took the opportunity presented by this complaint to suggest that Killearn see the King more frequently in person. Killearn responded that this was a decision best left to the "man on the spot. The owners of a vessel give the sailing orders: but it is usually more profitable for the Captain to do the navigation as he can best judge conditions of weather, tide etc. Any other system is liable to land the ship on the rocks." He dismissed the idea that he meet with Farouk directly as "both unwise and unprofitable." Killearn to FO, 18 April 1945, FO371/45920. Scrivener suggested that Killearn might use Gerald Delany, who was on good terms with Nokrashi, as an intermediary. Minute by Scrivener, 14 April 1945, FO371/45920. Killearn also accepted Hassanein's recommendation that he use Hasan Youssef, the Assistant Head of the Royal Cabinet, as intermediary with the Palace. Killearn to Campbell, personal, 14 May 1945, FO371/45920.

cooperative government in power.[104] As Killearn argued in June: "I submit it is time we should show firmness and determination with these folk. I believe it to be the only language that in their present inflated mood they will understand."[105] The Foreign Office refused to be drawn into this policy: "While we have every sympathy with your views in this matter, we are anxious to avoid taking drastic action of a nature which might precipitate a crisis before the political situation here is clearer and the situation created by the San Francisco Conference has been more fully studied and appreciated."[106]

Scrivener, as head of the Egyptian Department, refused to be drawn more fully into internal Egyptian politics and served as a useful balance to Killearn in London. He attributed the difficult situation in Egypt in the summer of 1945 partly to Killearn's own personality as Ambassador and his approach to diplomacy. Britain's wartime policy in Egypt:

> has been swayed not inconsiderably by the predilections of our representative, whose relations with the King are notoriously bad, whose relations with Nahas Pasha are almost embarrassingly close, and whose relations with the present Prime Minister are rapidly becoming impossible…The major result of this state of affairs is that, in my personal opinion, we clung to Nahas Pasha for too long, did no good to our prestige by doing so and contributed to the present impossibility of restoring a Coalition Government led by Nahas.[107]

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[104] Killearn to FO, 30 May 1945, FO141/1043. He suggested that his good friend, Hussein Sirry, was the best possibility. The Foreign Office was less sure, considering Hussein Sirry's untimely resignation in 1942 as the leading cause of the Abdin Palace incident and viewing him as apt to run away in the face of crisis. Minute by Scrivener, 1 June 1945, FO371/45921.

[105] Killearn to FO, 23 June 1945, FO371/45921.

[106] FO to Cairo, 26 June 1945, FO 371/45921. Killearn's combativeness with Nokrashi's government reflected his growing sense of weariness with the situation in Egypt which was commented on in London. Scrivener observed that "Lord Killearn is at the moment in a state of exasperation with almost everyone in Egypt." Minute by Scrivener, 24 June 1945, FO371/45921. Even Killearn himself observed in his diary that perhaps he was losing perspective: "I must confess that just lately I have become increasingly aware that all these petty little local squabbles and politics have come to irk me more than a little. In short that one is becoming stale and that a change, even at the cost of retirement would not be entirely unwelcome." Killearn Diaries, 12 May 1945.

[107] Minute by Scrivener, 13 Aug. 1945, FO371/45923.

The only solution was to withdraw from intervention in Egyptian internal affairs and allow the King to have "a free hand to tackle his Augean stable." Scrivener was thus supporting a growing consensus among British officials that the King could serve as a source of stability in Egypt now that the Wafd had been removed from power.[108] They had owed Nahas for his support in 1942, but Scrivener considered that debt paid with the support they had offered while he was in office and their protection once he was removed.[109]

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[108] In an observation with which Scrivener expressed his agreement, one Foreign Office official noted: "King Farouk will remain on the Throne as the one unchanging factor in Egyptian political life for very many years; that the Wafd is discredited, a spent force; that pending the emergence of some new party with a sound programme of social reform and the drive, strength, enthusiasm and popular support to put it through, the best we are likely to get out of the Egyptian parliamentary system for some years is an uneasy coalition dominated by the King." Minute by Chaplin Andrews, 10 April 1945, FO371/46005.

[109] Minute by Scrivener, 13 Aug. 1945, FO371/45923.

PART IV: NATIONALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE END OF THE WAR

Chapter 9: A "New Deal" for the Kurds: The Mulla Mustafa Revolt in Iraq, 1943-1945

The 1941 coup had brought to the fore the recurring issue of the sectarian and ethnic balance of power in Iraq. Neither the Shias nor the Kurds had supported the Rashid Ali coup; in fact, Rashid Ali's inability to incite the Iraqi "tribes" to fight against British forces was cited as a contributing factor to the coup's failure.[1] Iraq's Shia majority and Kurdish minority called for increased participation in the political process as a reward for their support of the Iraqi Regent during the coup. Kurdish leaders who had been in exile or otherwise submitted to the Iraqi government issued new demands for the redress of their grievances, taking advantage of the instability of the post-coup period.[2]

[1]The British used the term "tribe" indiscriminately in reference to the Shia communities on the Middle Euphrates, the Iraqi Bedouin, and the Kurds of northern Iraq. The terminology of the "tribe" is still used to describe Kurdish social and political organization in contemporary studies. Politicians in Baghdad from the mid-1930s attempted, not always successfully, to win the support of "the tribes" as a means of undermining the government in power. See Majid Khadduri, *Independent Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics since 1932*, chapters 3-4. The British contemplated adopting this Iraqi tactic by encouraging both the Shia tribes of southern Iraq and the Kurds of northern Iraq to support the Regent and rise against the Rashid Ali government. These plans were never put into action, although one Kurdish leader, Shaykh Mahmud, escaped from detention during the coup and returned to Sulaymaniya and prepared to attack Iraqi government posts there when Rashid Ali's government fell. AHQ Iraq to MICE Cairo, 28 April 1941, FO371/27067; Cornwallis to Eden, 11 July 1941, FO371/27078; Walid Muhammad Sa'id A'zami, *Intifadat Rashid 'Ali al-Kilani wa-al-harb al-'Iraqiyah al-Baritaniyah, 1941* [The Rashid Ali al-Kilani Uprising and the Iraqi-British War, 1941], 132-133; Daniel Silverfarb, *Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East: A Case Study of Iraq, 1929-1941*, 137-138.

[2] Any period of instability in Iraq sees a resurgence of these claims for greater autonomy if not independence. For example, the weakness of the Iraqi government after the death of King Faisal in 1933 provided an opportunity for Kurdish leaders to pressure (unsuccessfully) the Government of Iraq to implement the League of Nations' stipulations for the protection of Kurdish rights. This trend predates the creation of the state of Iraq itself as demonstrated by the struggles between the Ottoman and Safavid/Qajar empires for control of these borderlands. David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 25; 287-288.

Longstanding tribal feuds resurfaced and challenged not only the Iraqi government, but also British interests in Iraq with respect to the larger war effort. British activity in Iraq since the end of the Mandate had been focused on Baghdad, but the Embassy staff now turned their attention again to the provinces.

The Kurdish revolt of 1943-1945, led by Mulla Mustafa, proved to be the biggest challenge to the new British advisory system and the most pressing of the recurring issues outside of the Iraqi capital during World War II.[3] To the Iraqi government, the inability of the army to put down the uprising and restore order in northern Iraq was a humiliating defeat that threatened to undermine Baghdad's authority. Mulla Mustafa's brother, Shaykh Ahmad, had led the Barzanis in a similar uprising in 1931-32. The Iraqi army suffered multiple defeats in trying to quell this first revolt, and only succeeded in 1932 with the support of British air power. Mulla Mustafa's 1943 revolt threatened to follow a similar pattern, challenging the central government while it was struggling to reestablish its legitimacy after the 1941 coup.[4]

From the British perspective, this revolt had the potential to disrupt Iraq's contribution to the Allied war effort, particularly its grain shipments, its role in imperial communications, and its oil supply. Unrest in the Kurdish areas on Iraq's northern and

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[3] The British were preoccupied with a number of "tribal" issues throughout Iraq after 1941. This chapter will focus solely on the Kurds and the Mulla Mustafa revolt because it posed the most serious threat to both the authority of the Iraqi government and to Britain's wartime aims in Iraq. It also had long-term consequences for the Iraqi Kurdish movement.

[4] McDowall, 178-180. For this first Barzani revolt against the Government of Iraq, see also Wallace Lyon, ed. D.K. Fieldhouse, *Kurds, Arabs and Britons: The Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq 1918-44* and Mas'ud al-Barzani, *al-Barzani wa-al-harakah al-taharruriyah al-Kurdiyah* [The Barzanis and the Kurdish Liberation Movement], vol. I (Bayrut: Kawa lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi', 1997). Mas'ud Barzani is a contemporary leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and this work places the Barzani revolts of the 1920s-1940s into the larger context of the Kurdish nationalist movement. Barzani points out that the 1943-1945 uprisings differed from the earlier Barzani revolts of the 1930s by incorporating a wider

eastern borders had larger implications. The uprising might be appropriated in the name of Kurdish nationalism and spill over into neighboring countries, due to Iraqi Kurds' contacts with Kurds in Turkey and Iran.[5] This was a cause for concern particularly after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, as the British feared that the Germans might push through Russia and into Iran and Iraq, threatening India, making Iraq's stability vital to the whole region.

For these reasons, the Mulla Mustafa uprising in 1943 forced British officials to reassess their official policy of nonintervention in Iraqi internal politics and their policy towards the Kurds. Although Britain had troops in Iraq after the 1941 coup, Britain ultimately decided to rely on influence rather than force. The Foreign Office had a two-pronged, gradualist approach to the Kurdish issue in keeping with their status quo policy for the Middle East. On the one hand, they urged Kurdish leaders to avoid violence, submit to Iraqi government authority, and assimilate into the Iraqi state. At the same time Britain encouraged the government to address Kurdish grievances by appointing more Kurdish officials, providing supplies to Kurdish areas, and developing infrastructure in the north. As one British official working in the Kurdish areas summarized Britain's

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geographical area and a larger proportion of the Kurdish population, including intellectuals and nationalist leaders. [76].

[5] The Kurds live in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. The term "Kurd" covers a diverse population group, with two main languages (Kurmanji in the northern Kurdish areas, Surani in the southern areas) and religious diversity (primarily Sunni but also including a sizeable Shia minority as well as small groups of Yezidis). The Kurds historically inhabited the borderlands between the Ottoman and Safavid/Qajar Empires, and the Kurds took advantage of their status between these empires, crossing over this "permeable frontier" to escape state action and using their position on this strategic border as leverage. McDowall, 6-7. McDowall argues that a distinct Kurdish national identity was a parallel development to the emergence of Turkish, Arab, and Iranian nationalism in the early twentieth century within the Ottoman and Qajar Empires, all of which pushed Kurds to the political margins of what had previously been multiethnic empires. Ibid., 2.

position, "anything was good enough so long as we could trundle along until Iraq could be left in complete control of her own affairs before the end of hostilities in the west."[6]

The British were divided as to the best response to this Kurdish revolt. Officials at the Foreign Office in London insisted that Britain not get involved in local issues unless absolutely necessary to protect Allied war interests in Iraq. By contrast, the British Political Advisers working in the Iraqi provinces believed that the Kurds had been cheated out of an independent state after World War I when the state of Iraq was formed, and that Britain had a duty to right this long-standing wrong.[7] The staff of the Embassy in Baghdad found itself mediating between the pragmatic goals of the Foreign Office and the personal ideals of the Political Advisers "on the spot" with respect to the Kurdish issue.

The Mulla Mustafa revolt of 1943-1945 was but one episode in the ongoing struggle between the Government of Iraq and the Kurds for control of the northern Iraqi provinces. Yet was it a true nationalist revolt or, as the British and Iraqis argued, an "isolated tribal uprising"? A closer study of this revolt sheds light on the status of the Kurdish nationalist movement within Iraq during the 1940s. It also reveals the difficulties that the Government of Iraq faced in trying to appease minority and sectarian concerns at the same time that it was involved in the movement for Arab unity that would, by definition, subsume these communities into a larger Arab state. Britain's response to this

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6 Kinch, unpublished manuscript memoirs in the Kinch papers.

7 For the British and the Kurds of Iraq during the Mandate period, see Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932* (London: Ithaca Press for the Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1976) and McDowall. Lyon's memoir, *Kurds, Arabs and Britons*, is particularly valuable for demonstrating how the attitudes of the Political Advisers during World War II were shaped by their experiences in Iraq during the 1920s and 1930s.

event demonstrates the extent to which Britain reverted to some of its Mandate-era administrative policies after 1941, and the continuing tension between Britain's commitment to a united Iraq and its sense of responsibility for Iraq's minorities. Britain had a greater presence in Iraq after 1941 than at any time since the termination of the Mandate, but it hesitated to use this power due to the pressures of wartime, and instead relied on the personal influence of both the Ambassador and the Political Advisers, acting as his representatives in the provinces. The Mulla Mustafa revolt proved to be the greatest test to the new Political Advisory system.

On the eve of World War II the British considered the tribes of Iraq to be a latent threat, ready to seize any opportunity of instability in the country to reassert their control of the provinces at the expense of the central government. On the other hand, the Iraqi army and politicians might attempt to exploit the tribes for their own ends, as they had done during the military coups of the 1930s.[8] The Government of Iraq's policy was to "placate tribal feelings as far as possible, without any definite display of weakness," cracking down harshly at any sign of revolt. The tribes were generally friendly towards Britain, but British military authorities were aware, as early as 1939, that if enemy agents were successful in destabilizing tribal areas, and winning their allegiance, this would have serious implications beyond Iraq's borders.[9]

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[8] An RAF intelligence assessment of the strength of the Kurdish tribes in 1939 noted: "Individually, the tribes, though still well armed, are lacking in cohesion and can be controlled without difficulty; the danger lies in their exploitation by political parties in opposition to the government of the day." "I" Branch memorandum, "Tribal situation in Lower and Middle Euphrates Areas," 5 July 1939, Air headquarters, British Forces in 'Iraq, FO 371/23202.

[9] Ibid.

In preparation for such a development, the British made contingency plans to destroy Iraq's oil infrastructure, concentrated troops in northern Iraq, and recruited the Kurds to construct defenses such as earthworks and trenches.[10] The War Office even proposed organizing Kurdish troops to defend Iraq in the case of an invasion, although British officials in Iraq questioned the wisdom of this policy.[11] Britain's preoccupation with security in the northern provinces appeared to be well founded when three German parachutists and a Kurdish-speaking Iraqi were captured in June 1943 near Mosul. During their interrogation they stated that their objective was to stir up the Kurds against the Allies and gather information, with a later party to undertake sabotage.[12]

When Russia entered the war on the side of the Allies in 1941, British officials grew increasingly concerned about the effect this might have on Kurdish sentiment. The British Adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior, C.J. Edmonds, noted that Kurdish nationalists could be divided into two groups: those who believed that the British government was the best hope for Kurdish aims, and the "realists" who "made up their minds that whereas the Arabs fit into the British Imperial scheme, the Kurds obviously do not, and that therefore it is foolish to expect British policy to upset the Arabs for the sake of the Kurds." The former group included mostly Kurdish tribal leaders, whereas the latter group, consisting of "intellectuals" (a word the British used frequently to refer to Kurdish nationalists in general) and military officers, would look for support for Kurdish

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10 *Kurds, Arabs and Britons*, 221-223.

11 Lyon to Cornwallis, 29 Aug. 1941, FO 624/24.

12 GSI GHQ Persia and Iraq Force Special Intelligence Review, 25 June 1943; GSI GHQ Persia and Iraq Force, Special Sitrep, 5 July 1943; and Directorate-General of Police, Political and Criminal Investigation branch, Baghdad, 15 Aug.1943, FO 624/34.

nationalism wherever they could find it, in particular Russia.[13] Britain was increasingly sensitive to any perceived attempt by the Soviet Union to establish contact with the Kurds of Iraq, yet whenever these fears were raised, British officials had to admit that they had no real proof of such contacts.[14]

Iraq's security was further complicated by the fact that Kurdish areas straddled the border with Iran and Turkey. Kurdish leaders in Iran and Iraq frequently took refuge on the opposite side of the border, resulting in complicated negotiations between tribal leaders, embassy officials and local governments for their return, either to amnesty or internment.[15] British officials in Iran did not see these border issues as merely localized events between Iran and Iraq, but saw them within the larger regional context, with possible repercussions in Iraq, Turkey, and Russia, thereby affecting Britain's larger strategic interests.[16] The situation in Persian Kurdistan was particularly tumultuous after the 1941 Anglo-Soviet occupation of Iran, and British officials in Baghdad were

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13 Edmonds to Cornwallis, 1 April 1942, FO 624/65. Cornwallis referred to "Kurdish 'intellectuals' interested in making difficulties for the Iraqi Government." Cornwallis to Eden, 28 Sept. 1944, FO 371/40039. Britain's concern with Russian influence in Kurdish areas dated back to the post-World War I period, when the Bolsheviks supported Turkish nationalists and the British feared that the Kurds might join up with them, undermining Britain's plans to use Kurdish areas as a buffer between Turkey and Iraq. McDowall, 130.

14 See for example Lyon to Embassy, 23 Dec. 1944; Edmonds to Cornwallis, 23 Dec. 1944; and Kinch to Thompson, 28 July 1944, FO 624/66. Kinch, an Assistant Political Adviser, believed that the Iraqi Kurds had contacts with the Soviets and although he admitted that it was difficult to gather concrete proof, he offered as evidence reports that Kurdish Iraqi army officers who supported Mulla Mustafa's cause as a means of acting against the Iraqi Government "allow their moustaches to grow unimpeded after the fashion of Stalin." Kinch to Thompson, 28 July 1944, FO 624/66.

15 Edmonds Diaries, 14 Oct. 1942.

16 Bullard to Thompson, 14 Aug. 1943, FO 624/31.

perpetually worried that this unrest, and in particular Russian influence, would spill over the border.[17]

The Kurds and the Mulla Mustafa revolt, 1943-1945[18]

Immediately after the 1941 coup the new Madfai government did make some progress in addressing Shia and Kurdish demands, including representatives of both communities in the Cabinet for example. Yet these concessions were limited, and Edmonds doubted the government's sincerity, as Madfai was generally known to hold anti-Kurdish views.[19] Cornwallis reported that Edmonds, when talking to Iraqi politicians, "…frequently senses in some of them a vindictive feeling that they would prefer to lose Kurdistan rather than secure them as loyal Iraqis by acknowledging their existence qua Kurds; they are ready to contemplate evacuation of the Kurdistan areas but never a really liberal policy."[20]

The Kurdish situation continued in this stalemate. Kurdish leaders called for reforms and more attention to the needs of northern Iraq, particularly after famine became widespread throughout the region in 1943. The Government of Iraq made token

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17 Lyon, in his typically colorful language, described the situation in Persian Kurdistan and the changing alliances between tribal leaders there as resembling "nothing more closely than the Baboons on the Mappin terrace of Regents Park Zoo but at least the Baboons have a keeper who periodically sees to their welfare whereas these people do not seem even to have that." Lyon to Edmonds, 3 Oct. 1943, FO 624/31.

18 The Mulla Mustafa revolt has a prominent place in the history of the Kurdish nationalist movement in the twentieth century. For the Kurdish perspective, Mas'ud al-Barzani, *al-Barzani wa-al-harakah al-taharruriyah al-Kurdiyah* [The Barzanis and the Kurdish Liberation Movement], 75-197, includes copies of documents pertaining to these events that Mulla Mustafa took with him during his escape to the Soviet Union in 1946. The Government of Iraq position is reflected in the government documents included in 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, *Tarikh al-wizarat al-'Iraqiyah* [History of the Governments of Iraq], vol. 5, 169-170, 188-193, 285-300. For the Mulla Mustafa revolt within its wartime context, see McDowall, 290-293; Daniel Silverfarb, *The Twilight of British Ascendancy in the Middle East: A Case Study of Iraq, 1941-1950*, Ch. 4; and Michael Eppel, *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 53-55.

19 Edmonds to Cornwallis, 7 Sept. 1941, FO 624/24.

concessions, while the British urged the Kurds to be patient and the Iraqis to be more responsive. This impasse was broken in July 1943 when Mulla Mustafa, a leader of the Barzani Kurdish tribe, escaped from detention in Sulaymaniya.[21] In September, he and his followers raided police posts, gathering arms when the posts surrendered. The Iraqi army intervened but it suffered humiliating defeats, revealing its weakness and lack of organization. Over the next two years, the Government of Iraq pursued a waiting policy, promising reforms and other concessions to appease Mulla Mustafa and Kurdish leaders in an attempt to keep the region quiet until the Iraqi army was strong enough to take action.

Both British and Iraqi officials quickly realized that the Mulla Mustafa revolt had the potential to inspire further uprisings throughout the country, affecting Britain's strategic priorities for Iraq, in particular the protection of the oilfields in both Iraq and Iran and British lines of communications, as well as its ability to supply grain. Since this would potentially lead to military intervention, which Britain wanted to avoid at all costs, Cornwallis felt it was necessary for him to use his political influence in order to "localise the present conflict…"[22] The Foreign Office agreed that Cornwallis should use any political means available to resolve the situation. The Iraqi government was responsible for maintaining internal order, and British troops would only be used to protect British

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[20] Cornwallis to Eden, 11 July 1941, FO 371/27078.

[21] The origins of the Barzani tribe reflect the great diversity in Kurdish social organization and the fluidity of the tribal structure. The Barzanis were a respected religious family involved in the Sufi tariqas who, in the nineteenth century, drew in followers from the surrounding area, many of them from settled agricultural communities. As McDowall observes, "the Barzanis created a tribe, 'tribalizing' non-tribal people" and holding this new "tribe" together through religious bonds. McDowall, 16. By the end of the 19th century the Barzanis were "one of the five most powerful religious families of Kurdistan." Ibid., 100.

interests, in particular the Assyrian Levies who were under threat of attack by "the insurgents."[23] The Foreign Office instructed Cornwallis that, as long as British interests such as the lines of communication were not threatened by the revolt they should leave military action to the Iraqis: "If the latter cannot deal with the situation it does not follow that we must engage in military operations to support them."[24] The Political Advisers in northern Iraq came to play a key role in Britain's attempt to restore order to northern Iraq without the use of troops.

In keeping with his focus on personal influence in diplomacy, Cornwallis kept in contact with Mulla Mustafa through an exchange of letters. His first letter opened the door to a flood of correspondence from the Kurdish leader asking for British intervention to ensure that the Iraqi government would address Kurdish grievances. Mulla Mustafa informed Cornwallis that he submitted to government demands as a response to Cornwallis's instructions, and therefore, he expected the Ambassador to put pressure on the Iraqi government to follow through on the settlement. Lyon noted that the general sense of local opinion was that these instructions from Cornwallis "were much more instrumental in securing his submission than Iraqi official intervention."[25] The Ambassador often took a paternalistic tone with Mulla Mustafa, in one letter warning him that further help from the Government of Iraq would depend on his own actions, and cooperation would be rewarded: "Remember that you and your tribesmen are dependent

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[22] Cornwallis to FO, 31 Dec. 1943, FO 371/40038 and Chaplin, FO Memorandum "The Situation in Iraq," 12 Jan. 1944, FO 371/40041.

[23] British troops were sent in to protect the families of the RAF Levies in December 1943. Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1943, 8 Feb. 1944, FO 371/40041.

[24] FO to Baghdad, 24 Dec. 1943, FO 371/35013.

[25] Lyon to Embassy, 15 Jan. 1944, FO 624/66.

on the help of the Government to obtain many of the things you need and that this help will only be given to you if you are obedient to the Government and maintain good relations with their officials."[26] Cornwallis had entered into correspondence with Mulla Mustafa as a means of exerting personal influence, yet the latter seized this opportunity to present his grievances to the Ambassador and try to encourage him to intervene more directly.

In the wake of Mulla Mustafa's revolt, the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nuri as-Said, appointed a Minister without Portfolio to deal with Kurdish issues as part of his December 1943 Cabinet shuffle. The new Minister, Majid Mustafa, faced opposition from both the Senate and the Regent, which would plague his mission.[27] Yet his appointment was viewed favorably by the British, and by the end of 1943, Cornwallis was optimistic about the situation in Kurdistan, noting that "events were taking a promising turn with reasonably bright prospects not only of the restoration of order in the affected areas, but also of a serious attempt being made to cope with long-ignored but legitimate tribal grievances."[28]

On taking office Majid Mustafa was sent to Barzan to meet with Mulla Mustafa and assess the situation in January 1944. Cornwallis proposed awaiting the results of Majid Mustafa's visit before taking further action, a decision welcomed in London and

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[26] Cornwallis to Mulla Mustafa, translation, 27 Sept. 1944, FO 371/40039.

[27] Cornwallis to Eden, 23 March 1944, FO 371/40041. Majid Mustafa was himself a Kurd who had served in the Ottoman Army and supported Shaikh Mahmud during the 1920s, later working for the Iraqi government. His actions during the 1941 coup were suspect and as a result he was suspended from government service for five years, but he was brought in before that period had expired to deal with Kurdish issues because, as a British military official observed, "there seemed no other Kurdish nationalist of the calibre needed to meet the situation created by the Barzani revolt." Col. Wood, CICI report, "Kurdish Nationalism and the Iraqi Government January-October 1944," 23 Oct. 1944, FO 624/66.

[28] Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1943, 8 Feb. 1944, FO 371/40041.

reflecting the Foreign Office's hesitance to get drawn into this conflict.[29] After this fact-finding mission Majid Mustafa blamed the unrest partly on the way in which Mulla Mustafa and other Kurdish leaders had been treated while they were held in captivity in Sulaymaniya, in particular their financial hardship. He also faulted the local administration for not suppressing the movement at the beginning, and for neglecting Kurdish areas, making them fertile grounds for revolt. He described the difficult conditions in the Barzani territories: no cultivation, famine, destitution, deserted villages, and a restless population. The Kurdish leaders told Majid Mustafa that "they had embarked on their rough course only because they had felt compelled to do so," while reassuring him of their loyalty to both the Regent and the Iraqi government.[30]

As for solutions, Majid Mustafa concluded that given the difficult conditions in the region, the weakness of the Iraqi army, and the strength and unity of the revolt's leaders, force was not the best option. Instead, he suggested that they use a "divide and conquer" strategy. There was conflict between Mulla Mustafa and his brothers, and by freeing the other Barzan chiefs still held by the government, this "will create dissension among their ranks and undermine their leadership." Allowing these leaders to return home would also prevent Mulla Mustafa and his followers from using their continued captivity as a rallying point. If the Iraqi government developed closer ties with other tribes that were not supporting Mulla Mustafa, this would help to decrease his influence.[31]

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[29] Minute by Young, 3 Jan. 1944, FO 371/40038.

[30] Translation of letter from Majid Mustafa, Minister without Portfolio, to the Council of Ministers, 18 Jan. 1944, FO 624/66.

[31] Ibid.

Majid Mustafa proposed that they should address the difficult living conditions of the inhabitants of the Kurdish areas by providing immediate relief in the form of necessary grain and supplies and developing the infrastructure of northern Iraq through repairs to phone lines and roads. The use of local labor for road construction would provide much needed employment. Yet these projects were not only for the benefit of the Kurds. Better roads would tie outlying villages more closely to the towns, and "ensure government control" by making it easier for government officials and, if necessary, troops, to travel to places of unrest. Majid Mustafa also recommended that Mulla Mustafa be called to Baghdad to formally surrender to the Regent and then allowed to return home. Majid Mustafa proposed appointing a number of liaison officers, drawn from Kurdish officers in the Iraqi army, to serve in the troubled areas. He concluded that even if these proposals did not lead to an immediate resolution of the problem, they would lay the ground for later attempts to suppress the rebellion, establish "orderly and just administration" and confine the rebellion to "certain specific localities" while winning the cooperation of surrounding areas.[32] The Cabinet accepted these proposals and Cornwallis hoped that, if allowed to stay in office long enough, Majid Mustafa's efforts at resolving the situation in Barzan would be successful.[33]

Acting on Majid Mustafa's recommendation, the Government of Iraq appointed a number of Kurdish officers in the Iraqi army to serve as liaisons between Baghdad and the Kurds. The Iraqi government hoped that these officers would improve their relations with the Kurds, but in fact many of them had close ties to Kurdish nationalists. Some

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Cornwallis to Eden, 1 Feb. 1944, FO 624/66.

were members of the small Kurdish nationalist society Hiwa, which had approximately 1500 members, including young Kurdish intellectuals and officers and representatives of the traditional Kurdish elite. Two members of Hiwa, who were also future Government of Iraq liaison officers with the Kurds, attended the founding meeting of Komala, a Kurdish nationalist organization in Mahabad, Iran in 1942. [34] The pervious Iran-Iraq border, which had served generations of Kurdish tribal leaders as a means of escape from central government crackdowns, now allowed a small but significant exchange of Kurdish nationalists between Iraq and Iran.[35]

Mulla Mustafa did visit Baghdad in January 1944 as Majid Mustafa recommended, and met with the Regent as well as Nuri and Cornwallis.[36] While in Baghdad he attended a party given by the Embassy's Public Relations Section, which was

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[34] McDowall, 289-290. Wood, the head of the British military intelligence organization CICI, was skeptical of the intentions of both Majid Mustafa and the liaison officers, calling the latter "a collection of extreme nationalists." He argued that these men could only have been persuaded to take these new posts if they were convinced that by doing so they would further Kurdish interests. Wood wrote of Majid's negotiations with Mulla Mustafa: "although his semi-public pronouncements were moderate as well as loyal in tone, he must at the least privately have persuaded all these men that with the support of Nuri Pasha and the British Embassy the pacification of Barzan would be but the preliminary of the long awaited realisation of justice and equality of treatment for Kurdistan." Majid Mustafa and his liaison officers were the very men who might turn Mulla Mustafa's tribal revolt into a much larger push for Kurdish autonomy. Wood, CICI, "Kurdish Nationalism and the Iraqi Government January-October 1944," 23 Oct. 1944, FO 624/66.

[35] This cross-border exchange was limited until the end of the war but symbolically important for the developing Kurdish nationalist movements. For example, in August 1944 Kurdish representatives from Turkey, Iran, and Iraq met at the meeting point of their respective borders and signed a mutual support pact, the "Pact of the Three Borders." William Eagleton Jr. *The Kurdish Republic of 1946* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 36.

[36] Kinch, one of the Political Advisers, noted in his memoirs that Mulla Mustafa stated that he would only go to Baghdad to see the Regent if a British officer accompanied him to ensure that he would not be held captive by the Iraqi Government. The Iraqi Government ignored this request, and Mulla Mustafa refused to go. Kinch agreed to accompany Majid Mustafa "as a civilian" to see Mulla Mustafa and offer whatever assurances were needed. Cornwallis did not like the idea but finally agreed, and Kinch accompanied Majid Mustafa and returned to Mosul with the Mulla, whom he described as "the most difficult rebel the Iraq Government had ever had to deal with." Kinch, unpublished manuscript memoirs, Kinch Papers.

a public sign of the Embassy's conciliatory attitude.[37] In May 1944, in a further attempt to win Kurdish support, Majid Mustafa and Nuri made a tour of Kurdish areas. The Prime Minister met with Kurdish leaders, heard their complaints, and gave speeches on the theme of Arab and Kurdish unity within the state of Iraq. Nuri's aim was, according to Wood, the head of the British Central Intelligence Center, Iraq, to address Kurdish grievances as a means of undermining Mulla Mustafa's support. However, the Iraqis still had to decide how to deal with Mulla Mustafa who, "in armed control of Barzan, was the living embodiment of the view that nothing was to be got from the Arabs except by threats."[38] While Kurdish leaders had been pushing for reforms since the 1941 coup, it was only after Mulla Mustafa's revolt brought home the real danger posed by instability in Kurdish areas that the Government of Iraq began to seriously consider addressing them.

Despite government promises of concessions to the Kurds, and the great hopes that the British had for Majid Mustafa's mission, they were soon disappointed by the lack of action. The government failed to implement a plan for real reform in Kurdish areas due to the state of Iraqi national politics in 1944. Prime Minister Nuri lacked the power to force through Majid Mustafa's proposals as the Regent did not support his Cabinet or the new policy towards the Kurds, and the Regent's sentiments were publicly known.[39] Although the Cabinet accepted Majid Mustafa's proposals, the hostile response of the

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[37] Wood, CICI, "Kurdish Nationalism and the Iraqi Government January-October 1944," 23 Oct. 1944, FO 624/66.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

Iraqi Senate and Chamber of Deputies dissuaded the Cabinet from implementing them.[40] The extent of Iraqi politicians' disapproval of Nuri's Kurdish policy is demonstrated in comments made by Ibrahim Kemal, whom the British viewed as a potential successor to Nuri as Prime Minister. According to Col. Wood, Ibrahim Kemal stated that he "openly and strongly condemned the work of Majid Mustafa…special attention to the Kurdish areas was quite unnecessary and that Majid was an upstart imposter…if he came into office he would stop at once the work which had been taken in hand by Majid."[41] The unpopularity of Nuri's Kurdish policy ultimately proved to be an important factor in the fall of his Cabinet in July 1944, providing a rallying point for Iraqi politicians who opposed him for other reasons.[42]

Hamdi al-Pachachi, who succeeded Nuri as Prime Minister, publicly stated that he planned to continue his predecessor's Kurdish policies, but his Cabinet included members hostile to the reforms. Regardless of his real intentions, he was unable to carry the reforms through. On the Kurdish side, Pachachi's government did not have the confidence of the Kurds in the way that Nuri had.[43] The politicians in Baghdad were not willing to pay the political price of implementing vital, yet unpopular, reforms in northern Iraq. The Iraqi government was engaged in a waiting policy under Pachachi,

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[40] Cornwallis to Eden, 8 June 1944, FO 371/40042. Edmonds reported that the Cabinet Ministers "were incensed that… the successful settlement of the formidable Barzan problem in accordance with a plan openly arrived at and officially approved by the Cabinet and the Regent, should have received such a scurvy reception instead of the marks of appreciation they felt that they, and Majid in particular, had earned." Edmonds to Cornwallis, 14 March 1944, FO624/67.

[41] Minute by Holt, March 1944, FO624/67.

[42] Eppel, *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny*, 54.

[43] Lyon to Oriental Secretary, 29 Aug. 1944, FO 624/66.

trying to buy time through drawn-out negotiations and minor concessions to Kurdish leaders until the army was strong enough to intervene and restore order through force.[44]

The lack of progress in Kurdistan frustrated Majid Mustafa and the liaison officers. Cornwallis reported that Majid Mustafa was "discouraged, disgruntled, and constantly threatening to throw up the sponge. Meanwhile, the liaison officers…were without guidance, lost heart and began to get into trouble with the officials whom they were intended to assist."[45] In March 1944 the liaison officers were returned to their army posts, having been unsuccessful both in meeting the Government of Iraq's objective of a settlement with Mulla Mustafa, and their personal goals of furthering the cause of Kurdish nationalism. Colonel Wood, the head of British military intelligence in Iraq, concluded that in spite of the efforts of Majid Mustafa and the liaison officers, "political Kurdish nationalism in Iraq is in complete disarray."[46]

The Mulla Mustafa revolt forced Britain to reassess its longstanding Kurdish policy. In 1944 the Assistant Oriental Secretary, Malcolm Walker, in a chance meeting

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[44] In describing the different approaches of Majid Mustafa, Nuri and Pachachi to the Kurdish issue, Wood wrote: "Where Majid Mustafa's policy had envisaged the accomplishment, by collaboration between the Government, the Kurdish nationalists and a reconciled Barzan, of the desires of the non-separatist section of politically minded Kurds, and where the subsequent policy of Nuri Pasha had apparently contemplated achieving the same result without reference to any Barzani malcontents, the Pachachi government seems to have intended to satisfy the material needs of the North, while taking a firm line with political and nationalist discontent and reserving the problem of Barzan until a reconstituted army was in a position to solve it by force." Wood, CICI, "Kurdish Nationalism and the Iraqi Government January-October 1944," 23 Oct. 1944, FO 624/66.

[45] Cornwallis to Eden, 8 June 1944, FO371/40042.

[46] The liaison officers had originally been appointed to use their personal connections with Kurdish leaders to influence the situation in northern Iraq. In this sense, they were the Iraqi equivalent of the British Political Advisers. Wood observed that the appointment of liaison officers failed because they were not given real power to effect change: "In theory they might make recommendations. In fact they were expected submissively to employ the influence accruing from their known opinions to cajole the tribesmen into submission to any demands which the civil authorities themselves were powerless to make

with Mulla Mustafa, candidly laid out Britain's attitude. Iraq was an independent country, and the Government of Iraq's relationship with the Kurds was an internal affair. The Embassy did not want to intervene in such an internal affair, as "H.M.G. were not prepared to endanger their relations with the Iraqi Government for the sake of the Kurds." However, the British wanted a fair settlement for the Kurds, and had been working for twenty years to get one and would continue to do so, but the Ambassador had to use his influence behind the scenes because "it was however essential that the British not appear to be interfering directly in Kurdish Arab affairs. We were not prepared to sacrifice our good position in the Middle East just for the Kurds."[47] When Mulla Mustafa responded that the Iraqi government was relying on the British to keep the Kurds quiet and using this as an excuse to "inflict more 'tyranny' on the Kurds," Walker refrained from giving what he considered to be the obvious response, that the Kurds were also "trading on our influence with the I.G."[48] Britain's interest in Kurdish affairs was to encourage the Iraqi government to make whatever concessions were necessary to keep northern Iraq quiet and prevent the unrest from spreading, as this might threaten the war effort and the security of Britain's interests. It was, in essence, another manifestation of the status quo policy. Britain was committed to maintaining the unity of the Iraqi nation as the best possibility for stability in the region, rather than allowing a separate Kurdish nation to emerge. While publicly distancing itself from the Kurdish issue, declaring it a matter of

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effective." Wood, CICI, "Kurdish Nationalism and the Iraqi Government January-October 1944," 23 Oct. 1944, FO 624/66.

47 Letter from Malcolm Walker, Assistant Oriental Secretary, to Perowne, 16 Nov. 1944, FO 624/66.

48 Ibid. The Embassy supported Walker's points, and Thompson noted that he should be "warmly congratulated on having talked sound sense to Mulla Mustafa." Minute by Thompson, 23 Nov. 1944, FO 624/66.

internal Iraqi politics, behind the scenes Cornwallis and his staff used their personal influence to try and improve the situation without having to call in British troops. Cornwallis instructed the political advisers "to use every effort to keep areas which are at present unaffected steady" and to keep in close contact with Kurdish leaders in order to "endeavour to keep them straight."[49]

When the revolt did break out, it immediately raised concerns in both the Government of Iraq and the British Embassy that it might be part of a larger Kurdish nationalist movement. British officials consistently argued that Mulla Mustafa's revolt and what they considered to be legitimate Kurdish grievances should be treated as completely separate issues. Edmonds reasoned that if the Government of Iraq would address Kurdish grievances and follow through on the proposed reforms, then they would be able to treat the situation in Barzan "like any ordinary tribal trouble of limited scope."[50] Mulla Mustafa would lose the basis for his support and this would, as Cornwallis observed, "spoil his largely bogus pose of champion of Kurdish rights."[51] In line with this policy, the Embassy frequently referred to him as a "bandit," and emphasized the personal nature of his revolt: "He is interested, not in the political or economic welfare of his people, but only in the maintenance of his feudal state."[52]

Mulla Mustafa was the driving force behind the Barzani revolt, but he was not the only Barzani leader. The British reinforced the political leadership of his brother, Shaikh

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49 Cornwallis to FO, 16 Dec. 1943, FO 371/35013.

50 Edmonds to Cornwallis, 27 June 1944, FO 624/66.

51 Cornwallis to FO, 15 April 1944, FO 371/40038.

52 Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1944, 9 Jan. 1945, FO 371/45302. The Kurdish historiography of the revolt presents a different perspective, with Barzani noting that, in his first meeting

Ahmed, as a means of undermining Mulla Mustafa's authority. Acting on Majid Mustafa's suggestion, the British encouraged divisions among traditional Kurdish tribal leaders, and downplayed the significance of the Barzani revolt. One member of the Political Advisory staff, drawing on animal imagery, described Shaikh Ahmed as the real power in Kurdistan, "extremely greedy, cruel and foxy," with Mulla Mustafa sitting "like a dog in his presence…M.M. may have the brains but he is of no consequence at all among his own people."[53] Whether Mulla Mustafa intended his revolt to develop into a nationalist movement or not, a member of the Political Advisory staff noted that Mulla Mustafa had "established under their noses the nucleus of an auto-Kurdistan." He then outlined how a localized tribal revolt might have developed this greater significance:

> There is no reason why the outlook of M.M., who has always been more imaginative than the ordinary tribal leader, should not have been broadened first by the appointment of Majid Mustafa and the liaison officers, which linked his own local rebellion with the main trend of Kurdish nationalism, second by the tour of Nuri Pasha and the demands it provoked from thinking Kurds of the towns, and, most important of all, by his direct contact with the liaison officers themselves, the most practical and intransigent of Kurdish nationalists.[54]

Whether it was Mulla Mustafa's original intention or not, his revolt was appropriated by Kurdish nationalists to further their own ends.

Nuri was concerned that there might be a "big Kurdish political plot" behind the revolt in which the Great Powers were involved. Cornwallis assured him that British

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with government envoys soon after the 1943 revolt, Mulla Mustafa told them that "the issue was tied to the rights of the Kurdish people in general and was not a personal issue." [translation] Barzani, 95.

53 Jackson, DAPA Erbil to PA Northern Area Mosul, 31 May 1945, FO 624/71. However, Wilson, who succeeded Lyon as Political Adviser in the Northern Area, disagreed with the military authorities, noting that despite the belief of General Renton and others that Shaikh Ahmed was the "real Kurdish leader, and Mulla Mustafa is only the little shepherd boy who drove up the sheep…the name of Mulla Mustafa is the only one which is handed about from Khanaqin to Zakho" and was the real authority restraining the Kurds. Major R. Wilson, March 8, 1945, FO 624/71.

policy had been, for the last 20 years, to assist the Iraqi government in consolidating its rule in Kurdish areas and bolstering the strength of a unified Iraqi state, and any concessions that Britain urged the government to make to the Kurds were to help achieve this goal.[55] Nuri did finally receive confirmation of Britain's stance with respect to the Kurds during a discussion with the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, in Cairo in November 1944. Eden assured Nuri that Britain had no intention of establishing a Kurdish state, and, in Edmonds' words, Eden "gave him the impression that H.M.G. know exactly what they want and said definitely that we were not going to make the same mistakes as after 1918."[56]

C. J. Edmonds, the British Adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior, had his own thoughts on how to restore order in northern Iraq. He believed that the "Kurdish problem" should be viewed as "an administrative problem." Edmonds told the Regent that "no sensible Kurd" believed that the rebellions would bring real change, but they would not act to support the government if they believed that it was unresponsive to their protests. In a prescient comment, he noted that "a minority always tended to attribute omissions to deliberate design" and the Kurds would see the inequality between provisions for their region and other parts of Iraq in this light.[57] Dealing with the Kurds as an administrative issue, in Edmonds' opinion, meant providing sympathetic and responsive officials in Kurdish regions, and offering social services to bring northern Iraq up to the level of conditions in the rest of the country. They should develop irrigation

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[54] Capt. F. Stoakes, Deputy Assistant Political Adviser, Erbil to Political Adviser, Northern Area, Kirkuk on "The Confederacy of Barzan," 17 March 1945, FO 624/71.

[55] Cornwallis to FO, 13 Dec. 1943, FO 371/35013.

[56] Edmonds Diaries, 16 Nov. 1944.

schemes, "reform the tobacco monopoly," and implement road-building schemes as a means of providing immediate employment and visible signs of progress.[58] The Embassy supported this approach, putting pressure on the government to provide a "New Deal" for the Kurds.[59] Assistant Political Adviser Kinch also believed that Mulla Mustafa's revolt was "a purely administrative affair," separate from the "larger political aspect of the Kurdish question." Allowing Mulla Mustafa to continue to act as "the mouthpiece of the Kurds…can only be disastrous for the Kurds and the Government."[60]

British policy towards the Kurds had a tinge of the "civilizing mission" underlying it. The Kurds were seen as wild, unruly, disorderly, and lawless, and Kurdish tribal leaders were referred to as "brigands" and "bandits."[61] The Iraqi government needed to institute policies in Kurdish areas that would civilize and settle the Kurdish people, "among the most backward in Iraq," bringing order to a chaotic region. As one Embassy report suggested, "The Kurds will continue to be an element of disorder and a danger to the security of the greater part of the North of the country…The way to tame the Kurd is not to fight him but to civilise him."[62] This could be achieved through development projects in the Kurdish areas, building roads, irrigation schemes, relief efforts, etc. Such a "friendly and constructive policy" would "tranquillise turbulent people and make them useful citizens of the country," bring credit to Iraq on the

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57 Ibid., 8 May 1944.

58 Ibid., 10 June 1944.

59 Cornwallis to FO, 15 April 1944, FO 371/40038.

60 Kinch to Cornwallis, 12 May 1944, FO 624/66.

61 This was a long-standing stereotype, predating Britain's presence in the region. McDowall notes that "From the eleventh century onwards many travelers and historians treated the term 'Kurd' as synonymous with brigandage, a view echoed by nineteenth-century European travelers." McDowall, 13.

international stage for treating its people well, lessen the chance of frontier disturbances, and save money on military operations. This report reflected a sense of idealism, noting:

> When we treat people merely as they are, we make them worse. When we treat them as they should be, we improve them as far as they can be improved.
>
> 'Win hearts', said Lord Burleigh to Queen Elizabeth, 'and you shall have all men's hearts and purses.'[63]

"Civilizing the Kurds" was necessary to maintain the unity of the Iraqi state, as neglect of their demands threatened to turn them into a separatist movement. It was important, to both the Government of Iraq and the British Embassy, to emphasize that the Kurds were an integral part of Iraq and to treat them as Iraqis. In his report on his trip to Kurdish areas in May 1944, Nuri argued that the Kurds should be seen within the context of Iraq as a whole:

> …the Kurds of Iraq have no objectives at variance with those of the rest of the people of Iraq. The Kurds of Iraq, like other Iraqis, seek reform of the administration and that attention should be lent to matters of education, health, economic development and other vital matters, which sooner or later must necessarily be carried out in all parts of Iraq in order to raise the standard of living of the people, increase their efficiency and develop their national resources…we must look upon Iraq as one comprehensive entity and must undertake comprehensive reforms for the benefit and welfare of all.[64]

Kurdistan might be suffering from less attention than the rest of Iraq, but the solution was not to treat it as an exceptional case, but to bring it up to the level of the rest of the country.[65]

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62 Unsigned, undated two-part Embassy report presented to the Regent by Cornwallis on 30 May 1944, FO 624/66.

63 Ibid.

64 Report by Nuri, "The Kurdish Question," 30 May 1944, FO 624/66.

65 Ibid.

Lyon, the Political Adviser in the northern area, did not agree with Nuri's assessment of the Kurdish issue. He pointed out the hypocrisy of the Iraqi Government's position on the Kurds within the context of the movement for Arab unity:

> either it accepts them as 'Iraqis or it allows them their existence as Kurds; but it may not insist that they are not Kurds but 'Iraqis, and then jeer at them and refuse them 'Iraqi rights because they are not Arabs…it may not, in justice, arrest Kurds for advocating Kurdish unity and nationalism and then send emissaries to Cairo to wallow in professions of Panarabism. And since this is the very policy which the 'Iraqi government is pursuing with all its energy and ingenuity, it would not be surprising if the Kurds should seek their equal status within the framework by force, or else burst out of the framework altogether.[66]

Lyon compared the Kurds to the Scots and the Welsh, who "inspired the same feelings of annoyance among the English."[67] While "complete independence" was not feasible the Kurds should at least be given the rights they were guaranteed under Iraqi law. This concession would benefit Iraq, as it would turn Kurdistan into "a hard and impervious shell capable of resisting possible penetration by Iraq's neighbours in the not too distant future," in particular Russia with its growing influence in Iran.[68] Cornwallis responded that Lyon's memo made "dismal reading and is most of it true," but there was not much that they could do about the situation: "To put things right we would need to take over the whole country."[69] Experience told the British officials that setting Iraq on what they

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66 Lyon to Oriental Secretary, 29 Aug. 1944, FO 624/66. In this same report Lyon also commented on the importance of the oil fields in the Kurdish areas to Iraq's economy: he found it ironic that the Iraqi Arabs "despise them as an unnecessary appendage," yet there are no Arab villages in the Kirkuk oilfields which "give 'Iraq most of its modern importance."

67 Lyon to Cornwallis, 5 Oct. 1944, FO 624/66. This was a fairly common comparison: even McDowall notes that "Kurdistan had a reputation similar to Scotland as an acknowledged source of good officers and troops." McDowall, 22.

68 Lyon to Cornwallis, 5 Oct. 1944, FO 624/66.

69 Minute by Cornwallis, 11 Oct. 1944, FO 624/66.

regarded as the right path would require a major concentration of men, money, and military power that neither the larger war effort nor the British public would support.

The Embassy maintained relations with the Kurds primarily through the Political Advisers and Assistant Political Advisers, while the military relied on its Allied Liaison Officers. The influence wielded by these advisers was widely recognized. In fact, Iraqi Ministers requested that Assistant PA Kinch visit Mulla Mustafa during the summer of 1944, since they believed that he would be able to influence the Kurdish leader.[70] Yet there was a growing sense of fatigue, disillusionment and powerlessness among these men. As Kinch explained: "The position of being associated with developments and yet being uncertain of achieving anything except by chance has become rather depressing for a person like myself who has handled the political and liaison problems of a job like the pipeline."[71]

As the Kurdish situation grew increasingly tense some of the advisers became a liability, because they tended to sympathize with the Kurds at the expense of the Government of Iraq and official British policy. A sternly-worded warning sent from Col. Wood, the Head of British military intelligence in Iraq, to all of his officers in June 1944 reflected the seriousness of this situation. After summarizing Britain's official policy of nonintervention in Iraqi politics and the Kurdish issue in particular, Wood warned the officers that "If you agree openly and sympathise with adverse comments on the Embassy policy, i.e. the policy of His Majesty's Government…you are in fact committing

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[70] Minute by Thompson, 12 July 1944, FO 624/66.

[71] Kinch to Cornwallis, 12 May 1944, FO 624/66. Before being appointed to the Political Advisory staff, Kinch had worked for the oil company.

what is tantamount to treason."[72] One frequent subject of such complaints was Lyon, the Political Adviser in the northern area, who was one of the greatest proponents of Kurdish rights. Edmonds received reports from his Iraqi contacts that Lyon was being "most indiscreet and thereby doing great harm" by criticizing Iraqi and British policies.[73] His critiques of the Iraqi response to the Kurdish demands were so severe and widely known that the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs sent word to Thompson, the Chargé d'Affaires in Cornwallis's absence, that he felt Lyon exaggerated the situation and he did not want him working in Kirkuk or returning to Iraq at all after his leave.[74]

From Lyon's perspective, legitimate Kurdish grievances were being ignored and the Embassy was being used by the Iraqi Government as a tool against the Kurds. He complained to the Embassy that "unverified reports" about Mulla Mustafa were being given to the Embassy by Iraqi officials with the aim to "incite Ambassadorial Thunder…It seems to me that every effort is being made to frame Mulla Mustafa."[75] Lyon repeatedly wrote to the Embassy to report on the serious state of affairs in the Kurdish areas and the lack of government response and to call for further action.[76] British officials such as Lyon and Kinch who were most invested in resolving the Kurdish issue during World War II were some of the same men who had been most vocal in pressing for Kurdish rights under the Mandate. In the eyes of these British officials, Britain's

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[72] Col. Wood to all CICI officers, "Policy-Iraq," undated (received in Embassy 15 June 1944), FO 624/66.

[73] Edmonds Diaries, 4 Dec. 1943.

[74] Minute by Thompson, 4 Sept. 1944, FO 624/66. Thompson refused to act on this request until Cornwallis returned, because the Ambassador "not only had a high opinion of Col. Lyon, but took a personal interest in all matters relating to the P.A. staff."

[75] Lyon to Cornwallis, 25 Sept. 1944, FO 624/66.

[76] For example Lyon to Perowne, 2 Dec. 1944, FO 624/66.

increased role in Iraq after 1941 seemed to offer an opportunity to right these old wrongs, and yet Britain failed to do so.[77] In his memoirs Lyon expressed his frustration with Cornwallis's inaction on Kurdish issues, both as Adviser to the Minister of the Interior and later as Ambassador: "As a Political Officer in Kurdistan I had naturally a great interest and sympathy for the Kurds and their aspirations, but I had never been able to get my Chief to view the situation through Kurdish spectacles. He was a dyed-in-the-wool Arabist…"[78] While Edmonds was sympathetic to Kurdish demands, Lyon noted that by the time he had taken over the post of Adviser from Cornwallis the position had lost much of its influence and therefore he was unable to change the situation. Lyon felt increasingly helpless and frustrated by 1944. Tribal leaders such as Mulla Mustafa were demanding concessions and he realized he could do nothing to address their issues and "as my sympathies were entirely on their side I became ever more conscious of the delicacy of my position. If I couldn't help them I should clear out…"[79]

Lyon's departure was not the only change in British representation in Iraq. Vyvyan Holt, the Oriental Counsellor, also left in 1944. Both Edmonds and Cornwallis left Iraq in 1945. Cornwallis's successor as Ambassador was Sir F.H.W. Stonehewer Bird. On taking office, he reasserted Cornwallis's emphasis on personal contacts: "There is no doubt whatever that Great Britain continues to have a considerable and honourable rôle to support and in this country, and equally that we can only play our part if we

77 Fieldhouse, Introduction to *Kurds, Arabs and Britons*, 48.

78 *Kurds, Arabs and Britons*, 227.

79 Ibid. Fieldhouse notes that Lyon had a similar response to this situation in 1932 when he was given a new position as Land Settlement Officer: "he was delighted that he would no longer have any responsibility for carrying out political policies of which he profoundly disapproved." Fieldhouse, Introduction to *Kurds, Arabs and Britons*, 48.

approach its people as friends, depending on influence rather than upon authority for the achievement of our legitimate and beneficent ends."[80]

The departure of Britain's most experienced and influential Kurdish experts in such a short period of time was noticed by the Iraqis. There was a rumor that the departure of all of these long-serving officials with experience in the Kurdish north was a signal that Britain was changing its traditional policy and pursuing an anti-Kurdish agenda.[81] Major R. Wilson, the officiating Political Adviser in the Northern Area in 1945 noted that the PA and ALO staff in the Kurdish areas were "in a very awkward position" because the senior Kurdish experts had all either left Iraq or were on leave, and of those who replaced them: "our total experience is only a few years as compared to half a century."[82]

Wilson and his staff were also placed in an awkward position because "having no clear policy to interpret…it appears to many that we are keeping the Barzanis quiet against the day when the reconstituted Iraq Army can deal with them in its own way." He asked the Embassy for a clear statement of British policy towards the Kurds.[83] The Embassy staff was also receiving similar requests from Iraqi officials, who wanted to know what Britain's official Kurdish policy would be now that the war in Europe was

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[80] Stonehewer Bird to Eden, 5 July 1945, FO371/45303. Not everyone was happy with Stonehewer Bird's appointment. One Iraqi official pointed out to Stewart Perowne, the Oriental Secretary, that he was "unknown in this Kingdom except as having been twice accredited to the Court of the hereditary enemy of its Reigning House", namely Saudi Arabia. Minute by Perowne for Cornwallis, 6 March 1945, FO371/45329.

[81] Capt. F. Stoakes, Deputy Assistant Political Adviser, Erbil to Political Adviser, Northern Area, Kirkuk on "The Confederacy of Barzan," 17 March 1945, FO 624/71.

[82] Major R. Wilson, March 8, 1945, FO 624/71.

[83] Ibid.

over with Germany's surrender in May 1945. The Government of Iraq feared that Britain had its own designs on Kurdistan.

After receiving the Foreign Office's approval, the new Ambassador, Stonehewer-Bird, presented the Iraqi Prime Minister with an Aide Memoire setting out Britain's post-war Kurdish policy. It stated that the British attitude towards the Kurds "is exactly the same as that towards any other section of the community, namely it wishes them to be good, loyal, and prosperous subjects of their country." British officials working in Kurdish areas were reminded that they should work towards this goal: "They must not concern themselves with sectional politics or personal disputes. The Kurds are to be regarded only in the capacity of Iraqi subjects, not as a separate minority." Any Iraqi with a grievance would be instructed to take their concerns to the appropriate Iraqi government official rather than the British representatives. Stonehewer Bird also called on the Government of Iraq to ensure that Kurds were given a fair share of government jobs and funding for development projects.[84] The official British policy towards the Kurds and all minorities in Iraq was to discourage the formation of a "minority complex" and encourage their inclusion in a unified Iraq. As Stonehewer Bird noted, "I feel that in the long run it is kinder and better to pursue this even-handed policy and to do all in our power to foster assimilation."[85]

Cornwallis had once noted that the conflict between the Government of Iraq and the Kurds was "a conflict of wrong." The government had been "neglectful and vindictive" in its treatment of the Kurds, while Kurdish leaders were "ignorant, rapacious

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84 Stonehewer-Bird to Eden, 14 June 1945, FO 371/45346.

85 Stonehewer-Bird to Eden, 3 May 1945, FO 371/45346.

and reactionary. Their time is up, and they know it." Britain's role was to encourage the Kurds to participate in and submit to the Iraqi state, while urging the Iraqi government to address Kurdish grievances. Cornwallis believed that Baghdad would win in the end, but "it is our duty to see that, if possible, the victory shall be bloodless."[86]

The Iraqi government did make some concessions to the Kurds in 1945, including the signing of the Barzan Amnesty Law by the Regent in April.[87] The government also approved the proposal, first put forth by Edmonds, to divide the Mosul liwa and create a new Kurdish liwa, redrawing the administrative boundaries of northern Iraq.[88] However, in the opinion of some British officials, concessions only exacerbated the situation by making the tribal leaders "swell-headed…Concessions are always taken as a sign of weakness by the simple tribesman."[89]

The Embassy had consistently urged the Iraqi government to avoid using force against Mulla Mustafa due to the Iraqi army's lack of preparation to carry out such an attack. However, by December 1944 Mulla Mustafa's interference in tribal issues and reports that he was gathering troops led Cornwallis to inform the Foreign Office that, if Mulla Mustafa continued to stir up trouble "there would be no justification for dissuading the Iraqi Government from military action against him, provided that the operations are

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86 Cornwallis to Eden, 19 March 1945, FO 371/45302.

87 Wilson, APA Northern Area to PA Northern Area, 28 April 1945, FO 624/71.

88 Mosul was not only an exceptionally large liwa, but according to Cornwallis, "a centre of Arab Chauvinism which displays itself whenever possible in malicious activities against the Kurds." Cornwallis to Eden, 10 Dec. 1944, FO 624/66. Dividing up the liwa would allow the government to give more attention to the Kurdish areas as far as providing public services, and make it easier for the people to travel to the government headquarters. Edmonds to Cornwallis, 20 Dec. 1944, FO 624/66. Barzan and another Kurdish territory were transferred from under the administrative authority of Mosul to Erbil, which had a Kurdish Mutassarif, and the Iraqi government hoped this change would help to calm the situation. Cornwallis to Eden, 15 Jan. 1945, FO 371/45302.

89 H.M. Jackson, DAPA Erbil, to PA Northern Area, Mosul, 31 May 1945, FO 624/71.

undertaken in accordance with the approval of the British Military Mission."[90] The situation grew increasingly urgent in August 1945, when Mulla Mustafa resumed his attacks. The Embassy, in consultation with British military authorities in Iraq, had decided "that we cannot go on indefinitely with success advising Iraqi Government to mark time in the face of repeated provocation." However, they agreed that the Iraqi government should not act until proper preparations had been made: "there must be no-repeat NO-reckless precipitancy" and these preparations would require at least six weeks.[91]

When Mulla Mustafa's men occupied a government building in Bille, the Government of Iraq made plans to mobilize troops and the Royal Iraqi Air Force bombed the town. This decision went against the advice of General Renton, the head of the British Military Mission, who threatened to withdraw his men.[92] Stonehewer-Bird had a certain amount of sympathy for the government in making this decision, noting that "Ministers were in fact caught between the devil of military caution and the deep sea of internal political danger."[93] The Embassy wanted to ensure that its staff did not get drawn in, so the Political Advisory staff and the ALOs were instructed to stay at their headquarters. The Prime Minister appreciated this, as it helped to avoid the appearance of British

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90 Minute by Cornwallis, 4 Dec. 1944, FO 624/66.

91 Thompson to FO, 1 Aug. 1945, FO 624/71.

92 Thompson to FO, 13 Aug. 1945, FO 624/71. Renton also threatened to prevent the Mission from giving any advice to the Government of Iraq in dealing with Kurdish affairs. Thompson pointed out to the British military authorities that "the Mission were paid to advise but not necessarily to have their advice taken" and if he asked the Government of Iraq to heed Renton's advice this would effectively be putting Renton "in executive command of the operations."

93 Stonehewer Bird to Bevin, 10 Oct. 1945, FO 624/71.

intervention.[94] Thompson admitted that this policy was "not especially heroic, but we really must resist getting mixed up in these internal crises, and I shall be glad if you will strongly discourage among all your officers and British elements generally any tendency to advocate 'taking up the white man's burden.'"[95]

The Iraqi army had difficulty in defeating Mulla Mustafa's men, and enlisted the support of other tribes in return for money and arms, which Stonehewer-Bird observed was a policy the government might pay dearly for in the long run.[96] The Government of Iraq's success in convincing other Kurdish leaders to join the campaign against Mulla Mustafa reveals the divisions within the Kurdish leadership and the limitations of the Barzani movement.[97] Mulla Mustafa, Shaikh Ahmed and some of their followers escaped over the border to Iran, but it was generally believed that they would renew their efforts in the spring.

Mulla Mustafa's escape to Iran seemed to be the end of this episode in Iraqi history, but it was in fact only a respite. The Russians, who were jointly occupying Iran with the British, allowed the Barzani leader to settle in a village in Western Azerbaijan, where he established contacts with Iranian Kurdish nationalists. An independent Kurdish state, called the Mahabad Republic, was declared on January 22, 1946, and Mulla Mustafa and his men formed the most effective wing of the new republic's military. He

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94 Thompson to FO, 16 Aug. 1945, FO 624/71.

95 Thompson to Mead, 20 Aug. 1945, FO 624/71.

96 Thompson to FO, 22 Sept. 1945 and Stonehewer-Bird to FO, 6 Oct. 1945, FO 624/71.

97 Eppel, *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny*, 54.

conducted raids on behalf of the short-lived Mahabad Republic in Kurdish Iran and after its fall in 1946, sought refuge in the Soviet Union.[98]

Was Mulla Mustafa's uprising a nationalist revolt or, as the British and Iraqis described it, an "isolated tribal uprising."[99] This question had serious implications for the Iraqis, Kurds, and British that extended beyond the historical record. The Government of Iraq and Britain both had interests in limiting the impact of Mulla Mustafa's uprising and portraying it as a traditional tribal revolt, while it has taken its place in Kurdish historiography as an important episode in the evolving movement for Kurdish independence. The Iraqi government, particularly Prime Minister Nuri, was deeply committed to the cause of Arab unity during the later years of World War II, and hoped to gain leadership of this movement. A unified Iraqi state was an important component of this aspiration, and the Iraqis had a direct interest in assimilating all ethnic minorities and sectarian groups under the leadership of the central government. Nascent Kurdish nationalism posed a direct threat to this goal. The British were also committed to bolstering the unified Iraqi state because they envisioned an important role for it in Britain's post-war strategy for the Middle East. Kurdish nationalism, whether or not it went so far as to call for an independent Kurdish state, threatened these goals, and it was therefore in the interests of both Iraq and Britain to portray the Mulla Mustafa revolt as

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98 See McDowall, chapter 11. The classic account of Mahabad is William Eagleton Jr. *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*.

99 Historians are divided on this point. Eagleton notes that, during his revived campaign against the Iraqi government in 1945, Mulla Mustafa "increasingly adopted a nationalist position and even claimed the backing of the British Government." Eagleton, 53. McDowall strongly argues that Mulla Mustafa's uprising was not nationalist in nature, but rather a traditional tribal uprising for purposes of increasing the personal prestige and power of a tribal leader. McDowall, 293.

an isolated incident, and Mulla Mustafa as a traditional tribal leader only interested in extending his authority.

For the Kurds, however, Mulla Mustafa became a national hero for his role in the Mahabad Republic and his escape to the Soviet Union after its fall. Whether his intentions in rising against the Iraqi government were nationalistic in nature all along, or, as historian David McDowall asserts, "rather than Mulla Mustafa choosing nationalism, the nationalists chose him," the Barzani uprising of 1943-1945 was an important step along Mulla Mustafa's path to Kurdish leadership.[100] His success in uniting Iraqi Kurds behind him was limited, as demonstrated by the fact that some of the Kurdish tribes joined the Iraqi army in its campaign against him. In fact, it was really Mulla Mustafa's role in the Mahabad Republic, his successful military campaigns, and his flight to the Soviet Union, which gave him legendary status and turned him into a Kurdish hero. When Mulla Mustafa returned to Iraq after the 1958 revolution, his rhetoric reflected larger nationalist aims and he had refashioned himself as a national, rather than merely tribal, leader.

In the case of the Mulla Mustafa revolt, how effective was the Political Advisory system and Cornwallis's brand of personal diplomacy? Mulla Mustafa's contacts with the Soviets and his involvement in the Kurdish movement in Iran immediately after his flight from Iraq reveal that the British had underestimated the larger implications of Mulla Mustafa's revolt and his staying-power as a Kurdish leader. British officials, particularly at the Embassy staff and the Political Advisers, approached the Barzani revolt of 1943-1945 within the framework of earlier tribal uprisings, drawing on their experiences with

the Iraqi tribes during the 1920s and 1930s. They looked back to past experience, reflecting the revived "Mandate mentality" among British officials in Iraq after 1941, rather than looking ahead to the growing influence of Kurdish urban intellectuals and non-tribal leaders in the developing Kurdish nationalist movement. They underestimated the small but growing Kurdish nationalist network both in Iraq and in neighboring countries. The British did succeed in achieving their main objective, avoiding further armed intervention in Iraq for the rest of the war but, in the end, the personal influence exerted by the British Ambassador and his Political Advisers failed to get a "New Deal" for the Kurds of Iraq after all.

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[100] Ibid., 293.

Chapter 10: Egyptian and Iraqi Foreign Relations and the Movement for Arab Unity

During the early years of World War II, Egypt and Iraq had both faced the real possibility of an Axis invasion and occupation. The Allied victory in the Western Desert in 1943 and the receding possibility of a German push into Iraq and Iran through Russia removed this immediate threat. The Middle East was no longer such a critical area for the war effort. At the same time, these Allied successes pushed local public opinion in Egypt and Iraq back in favor of the Allies. British officials had long argued that success in the war would be the best form of propaganda. Only clear indications that an Allied victory was inevitable would convince the Middle Eastern states still sitting on the fence to openly support the Allies. The accession to power of governments friendly to Britain in Egypt and Iraq strengthened this pro-Allied trend. For all of these reasons, it finally looked as if Britain would get the "quiet time" it hoped for in the Middle East. Ambassador Lampson in Egypt even lamented in January 1944 that "So far as Egypt is concerned, the tide of battle has, quite definitely, flowed far away from us, and there was a time-at the end of last Summer-when one felt that affairs here were liable to become dull-a sort of 'after the party' feeling…"[1]

Lampson's contented, if deflated, feeling was short lived. He soon involved in the Cairo and Tehran Conferences, and observed that "it is now quite clear that Egypt is bound to remain an increasingly vital and important base of our strategy both in the Mediterranean and in the coming struggle in the Far East-so that has cheered one up quite

[1] Killearn Diaries, 1 Jan. 1944.

a lot."[2] The Middle East might not have been under the immediate threat of invasion, but in Britain's estimation it still had a vital role to play in Britain's strategic planning.

The turning of the war meant that not only Britain, but also the local governments of Egypt and Iraq, were looking towards the post-war settlement. The recession of the war from the Middle East provided an opportunity for the local governments of Iraq and Egypt to focus on their own desiderata for the post-war period, and saw the revival of interest in a number of larger regional and foreign policy issues that had been subsumed in the immediate threat of war. The future of the dependent states in the region, particularly Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, became a topic of renewed activism after receding into the background in 1941-1942. After 1943 both Egypt and Iraq took a renewed interest in foreign relations as a means of applying pressure to Britain, forcing Britain to examine its post-war strategic requirements for the region. An examination of Egyptian and Iraqi initiatives in the area of foreign policy reveals the interplay between domestic Egyptian and Iraqi politics and British imperial aims. Foreign policy issues proved to be an effective tool for Egyptian and Iraqi leaders to strengthen their authority both internally and externally.

The Prime Ministers of Egypt and Iraq, Mustafa al-Nahas and Nuri as-Said, became increasingly active in the movement for Arab unity after 1943, seeing it not only as a means of bolstering their nationalist credentials at home but also to increase their

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[2] Ibid. Lampson seemed to have conflicting ideas as to whether he wanted a "quiet time" in Egypt or not. In the same diary entry in which he recorded his relief at the Middle East's continued strategic importance for Britain, (and by extension the importance of his own position), he complained about the internal divisions within Egypt: "Internally, unfortunately, the signs are not encouraging and I am afraid that this impasse between the Government and the Palace is almost bound to come to a head in the immediate future. Very boring because one wants a reasonably peaceful life here and it does not look as though we are going to have one." Ibid.

prestige within the Arab world. This movement also proved to be a useful vehicle for the Arab states to publicize their demands for a settlement in the remaining mandated territories. As Nuri explained to a Saudi representative, "The object was to make our voice heard by the powers and to induce the latter to grant Syria and Palestine their right of independence."[3] Both Nuri and Nahas believed that a joint effort would be more successful than individual appeals. British officials had a divided response to this movement, on the one hand recognizing its potential to complicate Britain's position in Palestine and relations with the French over Syria and Lebanon, but also fearing that openly opposing it would increase anti-British sentiment in the region. Britain ultimately took the position of publicly supporting the movement while working behind the scenes to temper Arab nationalist sentiment. British views are perhaps best summed up by Maurice Peterson's assessment of the movement: "My own views on Arab Federation are a) that we must let the Arabs arrange it, and, b) that they never will."[4]

Egypt and Iraq's Foreign Policy Turn

On January 16, 1943 Iraq formally declared war on the Axis, signaling Prime Minister Nuri's renewed emphasis on foreign affairs. The British Ambassador in Iraq, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, noted that this declaration reflected well on the British because of the message it sent to the rest of the region: "For the first time in history an independent Moslem state entirely on its own free initiative has declared war as Ally of Great Britain

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[3] Procès-verbale of the first meeting between Nahas and Ibn Saud, 11 Oct. 1943, FO371/34963 and Cornwallis to Eden, 2 May 1943, FO371/34958.

[4] Minute by Peterson, 30 Jan. 1942, FO 371/31337.

thereby setting example to the whole Moslem and Arab world by coming down unequivocally on our side."[5]

Iraq's declaration of war was just one attempt of many on the part of the Arab states to appropriate the language of the western powers' official wartime declarations for the benefit of the region as a means of legitimizing the Arab nationalist movement. This declaration was not an altruistic burst of pro-Allied fervor on the part of Iraq, but rather a politically calculated move by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri as-Said to bolster Iraq's prestige in the Middle East. By declaring war, Iraq would now have a seat at the peace conference after the war.[6] Within the Middle East, the declaration was seen as a maneuver by Nuri to gain prominence in the region. The declaration caused "considerable surprise and annoyance" in Egypt as it appeared that Iraq had "stolen a march on the remainder of the Arab world."[7] It was also a useful tool for promoting Nuri's Arab Unity agenda. Iraqi propaganda to prepare the country for the declaration made reference to Article III of the Atlantic Charter with respect to Syria and Palestine to demonstrate the benefits Arabs would gain from the signing of the Declaration of the United Nations.

The British Embassy in Baghdad was worried that, while Iraqis were fully aware of the benefits they would receive through the declaration of war, they were overlooking the obligations it brought. Albert Hourani reinforced this concern in his 1943 report on Arab nationalism. He had been in Iraq at the outbreak of war in 1939, and he observed

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[5] Cornwallis to FO, 7 Jan. 1943, FO 371/34996.

[6] Given the deep resentment many Arab leaders felt at having been overlooked at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, this attitude is not surprising.

[7] Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1943, 8 Feb. 1944, FO 371/40041.

that among those who supported the declaration, "there were those, including probably certain members of the Government itself, who regarded the declaration as a masterpiece of political cleverness, by which Iraq secured automatically and without effort a share in the fruits of victory."[8] Embassy officials attempted to remedy this situation through discussions with Nuri and other Iraqi leaders, as well as columns in the *Iraq Times* and *Basra Times*.[9] Cornwallis expressed how "shocked" he was that Iraq's leaders, including Nuri, "had only paid a brief lip service to the higher principles which should have animated them."[10] Nuri's response was to offer Iraqi troops to fight outside of Iraq, notably in Turkey or Syria. The British declined this offer because it would be extremely unpopular with Iraqis in general and the Iraqi army in particular.[11]

As the war moved away from Egypt, Egyptian politicians also began to turn their attention to the post-war peace conferences and what Egypt might gain from them. As Scrivener in the Foreign Office quipped, "the good-will towards foreigners of the average Egyptian varies inversely with the distance of the Axis armies from the Delta."[12] Egyptian politicians revived the old slogan of "istiqlal al-tam," or "complete independence," which implied the removal of all foreign influence from the country. In light of these developments the Embassy in Cairo suggested that Eden, in talks with

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8 Hourani 1943 Report.

9 Cornwallis to Eden, Annual Review for 1943, 8 Feb. 1944, FO 371/40041.

10 Cornwallis to FO, 21 Jan. 1943, FO 371/34997.

11 Wilson, C in C Persia/Iraq to War Office, 8 Feb. 1943, FO 371/34997 and Thompson to Eden, 12 Sept. 1943, FO 371/35012. Hourani observed that there was some support for this idea in Iraq: "a number of thoughtful and responsible young men realised that it was not enough for Iraq to declare war. If she wished to be taken seriously she must actively participate in the conflict." Some army officers supported the idea as well as a means of redeeming the Iraqi army's image after its defeat in 1941. Hourani 1943 Report.

12 Scrivener to Shone, 21 Oct. 1943, FO141/917.

Nahas, should point out that Egypt suffered less than most countries in the war zone, and that in the post-war world "the emphasis for nations, as for individuals, is likely to be on obligations rather than on rights for some time to come." As an example of how Egypt was trying to manipulate itself into an advantageous position for the post-war negotiations, the Government of Egypt was talking with the Embassy's Legal Counsellor on the possibility of Egypt "adhering to the Atlantic Charter without formally joining the United Nations."[13]

Arab Nationalism and Arab Unity

The most important example of Egypt and Iraq's new foreign policy orientation was their support for Arab unity.[14] This movement promised to solve a number of problems: it provided a means for the Arab states to collectively put pressure on Britain and France for a solution to the Palestine issue as well as achieving Syrian and Lebanese independence. Yet the questions of what this unity would look like and how it would be achieved was more elusive. As Albert Hourani observed at the time: "Everybody speaks of union but few are trying to think out what it implies." True Arab unity faced both internal and external obstacles. It would require the surrender of some measure of state sovereignty, and the longer this process was put off, the more difficult this would

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13 Note by Shone, 12 Oct. 1943, FO141/917.

14 For the movement for Arab Unity during the interwar period and World War II, see Yehoshua Porath, *In Search of Arab Unity 1930-1945* (London: Frank Cass, 1986). Ralph Coury's works are particularly useful for Egypt's evolving and often complex relationship with Arab nationalism: see two articles by Ralph M. Coury, "Who 'Invented' Egyptian Arab Nationalism?," part I and part II, *International Journal of Middle East* Studies 14 (1982), 249-81 and 459-79 and his biography of Azzam: *The Making of an Egyptian Arab Nationalist: The Early Years of Azzam Pasha, 1893-1936* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998). Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), is also useful. For the role that the Palestine issue played in the Arab unity movement, see Michael Eppel, *The Palestine Conflict in the History of Modern Iraq: The Dynamics of Involvement 1928-1948*.

become: “every year which passes increases the power of the vested interests which desire the continuance of the present divisions-the officials who might lose their positions and the politicians who might cease to be important should union be carried out. In this way division perpetuates itself.”[15]

Britain herself was partially responsible for the renewed interest in Arab unity in the middle war years. Against the backdrop of the Rashid Ali coup in Iraq, the growing crisis in Syria, and Britain’s real concerns about a possible Axis invasion of the Middle East, Churchill asked Eden for a reconsideration of Britain’s Arab policy in the spring of 1941. Eden’s response reflects how the issue of Arab Federation was closely tied to that of Palestine and Syria in British as well as Arab eyes. On May 27, 1941 Eden submitted a memorandum to the War Cabinet in which he noted the influence of the Palestine situation on Arab public opinion, particularly in increasing anti-British sentiment. With respect to Syria, he recommended allowing the Free French to try and win Syria to the Allied side. If they failed to make a declaration supporting Syrian and Lebanese independence, or if the declaration failed to have the desired effect, Eden felt that “we should hold ourselves free to turn from the Free French towards the Syrian Arabs” and make a declaration promising independence on behalf of Britain. As for Arab Federation, he repeated the suggestion that “the only practical solution of the Palestine problem would be a federation of Middle Eastern States, in which a Jewish State should have a place as one of the component units.” He felt that the Arabs should make such a declaration themselves but did not think it was likely due to dynastic rivalries and the fact that Iraq wanted Baghdad to be the center of such a federation. He concluded: “I fear,

[15] Hourani 1943 Report.

however, that an Arab federation is not at the moment practical politics…Nevertheless, Arabs generally agree that some form of 'Arab federation' is desirable, and I think that we should not only refrain from opposing such vague aspirations, but even take every opportunity of expressing publicly our support for them."[16]

Two days after submitting this memo Eden made just such a declaration. On May 29th, as part of a speech at Mansion House, Eden stated Britain's support for any Arab Federation plan put forward by the Arabs themselves.[17] The speech was well received in the Arab world, although the Jewish community was disappointed by the absence of any mention of the Jews in Palestine.[18] Eden's Mansion House speech would remain the benchmark for British policy toward the Arab Federation movement for the remainder of the war. In fact, Cornwallis informed Eden that it would be difficult to keep Nuri from pushing his Arab unity agenda because "he continually refers to your declaration in Parliament about Arab unity and assumes both that His Majesty's Government will continue to adopt the White Paper policy of 1939 and that they wish to get rid of French influence in the Levant."[19]

Britain's policy of support for the idea of Arab Federation was not a disinterested one. Not only did Britain believe that the statement would win Arab goodwill, but they

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16 War Cabinet, "Our Arab Policy. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs." 27 May 1941, FO 371/27043.

17 The actual text of the statement is: "The Arab world has made great strides since the settlement reached at the end of the last war, and many Arab thinkers desire for the Arab peoples a greater degree of unity than they now enjoy. In reaching out towards this unity they hope for our support. No such appeal from our friends should go unanswered. It seems to me both natural and right that the cultural and economic ties between the Arab countries, and the political ties too, should be strengthened. His Majesty's Government for their part will give their full support to any scheme that commands general approval." Quoted in H.A.R. Gibb's paper on "Arab Federation," 9 June 1941, FO 371/27044.

18 Lampson to FO, 3 June 1941 and Dr. Weizmann to J.M. Martin, 3 June 1941, FO 371/27043.

19 Cornwallis to FO, 21 March 1944, FO371/39987.

also hoped that if Arab Federation ever did become a reality, that it would tie the Arab states more closely to Britain. H.A.R. Gibb, in a 1941 paper on Arab Federation that he wrote for Chatham House, noted that while British interests in the Middle East included oil and communications, the Arab states also benefited from British protection, and if the Syria and Palestine issues could be settled, he believed this relationship would continue after the war "based on mutual interest." The Arab states faced internal problems which were "beyond their power to solve unaided. They need a friendly Power to stand by to give disinterested help and encouragement and even, if necessary, to take the initiative in a tactful way."[20]

Beyond its ideological appeal, the concept of Arab unity served a number of political interests during World War II. Internally, it provided a means for the regimes in Egypt and Iraq, which were weakened due to their reliance on British support, to regain their nationalist credentials through leadership of the movement. By turning the attention of the public outwards through pan-Arab campaigns and propaganda, Egyptian and Iraqi officials deflected criticism of the internal situation. Given the opposition that Nahas faced in Egypt as a result of the Black Book affair in 1943 and Nuri's struggle for power in Iraq in the face of Palace opposition, these nationalist credentials became even more important to keeping their governments in power. King Farouk in Egypt supported the movement to a certain degree for similar reasons.[21] The Foreign Office viewed Egypt's role in the movement in these terms; one Foreign Office official commented on "Nahas's

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[20] H.A.R. Gibb's paper on "Arab Federation," 9 June 1941, FO 371/27044.

[21] Killearn to Eden, 23 March 1945, FO371/45237.

tendency to balance his internal instability by Pan Arab stunts."[22] For Iraq, unity also had practical implications, because the Levant served as Iraq's "natural economic corridor" with outlets for trade and oil pipe-lines lying on the Mediterranean in territory under French rule. A united Greater Syria, including Transjordan, Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, would protect these Iraqi economic interests.[23]

From the perspective of Arab external relations, the fact that the Arab unity movement challenged the European-mandated political order set up after World War I gave it an implicitly anti-western tone. It provided cover for an Arab response to the two outstanding issues in the region: the future of Palestine and the independence of the French Mandates. The implications of Arab unity forced Britain to deal with Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon even though they preferred to postpone this discussion until after the war. Various British officials in the region recognized that it was in Britain's interest to decide what their post-war goals were for the region before demands were made.

Albert Hourani's 1943 report offered insight into the less tangible motives behind Arab nationalism.[24] His portrayal of the two competing dimensions of the Arab nationalist movement highlights not only on the complexity of Arab nationalism, but also Britain's divided response to it. He begins by assessing Arab society in general, using the language of illness and disease. In his estimation, the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of Arab society were exacerbated by a long period of Ottoman rule and the contradictory feelings that arose as a result of the Arab world's contact with the West in the nineteenth century. The Arab nationalist movement, then, was one attempt to "cure" this "diseased"

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[22] Minute by Hankey, 1 June 1944, FO371/39988.

[23] Cornwallis to Eden, 5 Nov. 1944, FO371/39991.

culture: "Its aims are to reconstruct the Arab community by providing it with new principles of cohesion, loyalty to the nation and a sense of responsibility to it; and to form the nation into a state with a government which people will obey because they feel it to be their own." In short, "the Arabs will once more be able to control their own destiny" and become equal with the West. Yet unfortunately Arab nationalism "is itself a sympon [sic] of the disease which it attempts to cure," and it is here that Hourani usefully articulates the two divergent strands of Arab nationalism in competition with each other:

> while in one of its aspects it is a movement with a definite and rational purpose, in the other it is a purposeless upsurge of grievances, obsessions and violent emotions. In the first aspect it is a movement with a constructive aim and with a programme of social and economic reform; which recognises the ills of Arab society and wishes to cure them with the help of the West; and which desires indeed that the Arabs should become part of the West. But in the second aspect it is a movement of revolt and opposition, dreaming not of a process of reform but of a moment of triumph or a gesture of defiance; its attitude to the West is one of hostility and it believed that the Arabs can generate out of their own resources power sufficient to withstand the West…These two concepts of nationalism, as a movement for the construction of a modern westernized state and society and as a movement of violent resistance to the West are already in conflict.[25]

In Hourani's estimation, Arab nationalism is, on the one hand, a means of coming to terms with the West and, on the other hand, rebelling against it. It is both a collective and a personal tension: "It is a struggle not only between groups but with the individual soul."[26]

By focusing on the divided purposes and goals of the Arab nationalist movement, Hourani also sheds light on Britain's ambiguous response to it. At times Arab nationalism and its manifestation in the form of the Arab unity movement was to be encouraged as

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[24] For the background on this report and its significance, see Chapter 1.

[25] Hourani 1943 Report.

[26] Ibid.

providing the best context for the maintenance of British influence in the Middle East. At other times it was to be discouraged as a real threat to British prestige and regional stability. As Hourani observed, Arab nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s took the second form, that of resistance and protest. In fact, Hourani's description of this phase applies to nationalist sentiment in both Egypt and Iraq in the early years of the war as well. From 1939 until 1941-1942, Arab nationalism was, from the British perspective, a negative force, one to be subdued because it could be utilized to push a radical agenda calling for complete independence for Palestine and Syria. The Arab nationalist movement from 1942 until the end of the war, particularly under the leadership of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri as-Said and Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Nahas, can be viewed as an attempt to use nationalism to achieve these same goals, but through the medium of diplomacy. One reason why Britain had such strained relationships with many of the overtly nationalist leaders is that they were aware of this "double nature" of Arab nationalism. Britain was concerned with how Arab nationalism might develop, but also too afraid of the repercussions in wartime of openly opposing it. At the same time, their concern about its spread was tempered by a belief that it would ultimately fail to amount to anything.

Arab nationalism was a means of challenging colonial influence, but after 1942 it worked through established diplomatic channels and the accepted international order as a means of putting pressure on the western powers. As Hourani observed: "Arab nationalism is primarily a movement for equality with the West. So long as sovereign independence was the mark of a mature Western nation the Arabs took it as their goal. But the present war has shown that no nation, even the strongest, can any longer be

wholly independent."[27] The preliminary bilateral talks on Arab unity, the conferences leading up to the formation of the Arab League, and the Arab League itself all fit within the bounds of acceptable diplomatic exchange, yet the ultimate aim was to use Arab unity to pressure Britain and France to resolve the outstanding issues of dependent states in the Middle East. While the first movement was opposed outright, the second received grudging support.

Egypt's role in the Arab Unity movement was unclear. Throughout the war the British viewed Egypt as a nation apart from the rest of the Arab world. Not only British officials, but other Arab leaders as well, doubted whether Egypt could be brought into an Arab union due to the negative feelings between Egypt and the other Arab states and because of the nature of nationalism in Egypt. As Hourani observed, "Feeling in Egypt is in the first place Egyptian nationalist and secondly pan-Islamic; there is very little pan-Arab sentiment."[28] Yet Arab nationalism, as opposed to Egyptian or pan-Islamic sentiment, offered useful opportunities for a weak government, reliant on British support to maintain power, to bolster its nationalist credentials by focusing attention outside of Egypt. Regardless of the sentiments of the people, it was a useful tool for Egyptian officials. For example, Nahas's intervention in the 1943 Lebanese crisis was partly an attempt to build the Wafd's nationalist credentials after the Black Book affair, and it was particularly important in showing the Arabs what joint action could accomplish. Lampson warned the Foreign Office that, even though "practical results" as far as true political unity might still be a long way off, the Lebanon experience revealed that talks of Arab

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

Unity "would inevitably raise particular questions which might sometimes be inconvenient to us. The intervention of Egypt and the other Arab States on behalf of the Lebanon has given to the Arab Unity movement a sense of reality which it previously lacked."[29] They could expect the Arabs to try similar interventions on other issues, such as Palestine.

Britain grew increasingly concerned at Egypt's growing interest in Pan-Arab affairs. Lampson viewed Egypt's renewed interest in the Arab world in the context of postwar planning, fearing that Nahas would use this as an opportunity to regain his nationalist reputation by making heavy demands. The best way to prevent this was to formulate a clear British policy towards the Arab world that would address Arab concerns with respect to the future of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine:

> If we can offer the peoples of Egypt and the neighbouring Arab countries a fair degree of satisfaction on these issues, and can at the same time make clear beyond a doubt the limits which our strategic and economic interests impose on our sympathies with Nationalist aims, we shall give a lead to the more reasonable elements everywhere to co-operate with us in holding together the structure of the Egypto-Arab world. If we continue to appear to be without any definite policy, mere guardians of the existing and unsatisfactory state of things, yielding only to violence from time to time, we may find arrayed against us in the end all the forces of change, political and economic, which may then well be attracted to the Soviet sphere as promising at least something other than present conditions felt to be no longer tolerable.[30]

Lampson was clearly aware of the dangers of the status quo policy from the long-term perspective, even if it was necessary in the short term.

While the British doubted whether or not Egypt would want to be part of schemes for Arab Federation, the Egyptians were taking the initiative themselves. In May 1942

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[29] Killearn to Eden, 29 Nov. 1943, FO371/35541.

[30] Killearn to Eden, 16 June 1943, FO371/35536.

Amin Osman approached Lampson with a plan from Prime Minister Nahas to get the Arab states to make a declaration of support for the Allies. This declaration would come at a price: Amin Osman noted that "The Prime Minister could not, however, make this approach unless some more nationalistically representative governments were established in Syria and Lebanon."[31] By banding together in offering something that the Allies wanted, Egypt hoped that the Arab countries could win a concession on what they wanted: complete Syrian and Lebanese independence. The British response was mixed. On the one hand such a declaration would have the negative effect of raising the Palestine issue and opening a number of other issues that the British would rather avoid until the end of the war. One Foreign Office official predicted that, if such a declaration were proposed, Ibn Saud would oppose it, Iraq would make similar demands regarding Syria and Lebanon, and Transjordan would call for independence.[32] Yet as Lampson noted, "Against this we do not, in view of discontent in…Arab world and of Egyptian sympathy with the Arab cause, want to appear obstructive when the Axis is so effusively forthcoming."[33]

The issue of Arab Federation reemerged in 1943 in Iraq due to a number of internal and external developments. Nuri's successful push to have Iraq declare war was viewed as an attempt to give Iraq leadership in the Arab world and signaled the reemergence of this issue.[34] Renewed Arab nationalism in Iraq was also a response to the growing pro-Zionist activity in the United States and Britain in response to celebrations

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31 Lampson to Foreign Office, 10 May 1942, FO 371/31337.
32 Minute by Eyres, 13 May 1942, FO 371/31337.
33 Lampson to Foreign Office, 10 May 1942, FO 371/31337.
34 Edmonds Diaries, 20 January 1943.

for the 25th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration in November 1942, and later as part of the 1944 American Presidential elections. The Iraqi press and radio began an anti-Zionist campaign with Nuri's approval.[35]

In January 1943 Nuri offered his personal views on the Arab unity movement in a report that came to be known as Nuri's "Blue Book." Nuri argued that the Arabs of the former Ottoman provinces were "one people," and he put the movement into a larger historical context: "These Arabs of the Near and Middle East have for nearly a century been struggling to secure their natural right to independence, so that they may be able to unite; to recreate their ancient glory and to progress in the path of civilization in freedom and peace." After tracing Arab participation in World War I, he described the sense of betrayal and frustration at the post-war settlement, noting that the Mandate system was "harder for the Arabs to bear than the old Ottoman rule. The mandatory system broke up the Arab territories into a number of separate administrations and was an arrangement which, if persisted in, would destroy Arab unity for ever." This mandate system not only undermined Arab unity, but was the root cause of Arab ill will towards Britain and France. He explicitly tied the unrest in the region during the inter-war period, the sense of "unsettled" conditions, to this Mandate system and the way in which it impeded Arab national unity. Nuri then offered the British a simple solution to this problem: "any policy which satisfied the legitimate political rights and aspirations of the Arabs will restore peace to the Arab countries and that such peace and contentment will be of invaluable

[35] The Embassy was concerned because, given the strict controls placed on the local press, a new campaign like this would be interpreted to have Embassy approval and, as Thompson reported, local rumor was that the Americans were supporting the Zionist cause, while the British were supporting the Arabs. Thompson to FO, 9 Sept. 1943 and 14 Sept. 1943, FO 624/31.

service in promoting the interests of the United Nations in this grave period of war" and "put an end to the Axis intrigues in the Arab countries."[36] Thus, Nuri tried to appeal to the British desire for stability and quiet in the region during wartime, arguing that it was only possible if the Arab states were given true independence and their rights respected. He meant by this a settlement of the Palestine and Syrian issues.[37]

In his Blue Book, Nuri explicitly tied the movement for Arab unity to the campaign for independence in the remaining mandated territories. The "only fair solution, and indeed the only hope of securing peace, contentment and progress in these Arab states" is for the United Nations to join Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan into one Arab state, while at the same time creating an Arab League for the other Arab states to join. This would not only satisfy the national aspirations of the Arabs, rectifying the wrongs of the Mandate period, but also create a viable state that would be able to defend itself in the post-war period. As for the Jews in Palestine, Nuri turned to the model of the semi-autonomous Maronite community under the Ottomans for inspiration, suggesting that a similar system would provide the rights and security the Jews desired "subject to general supervision by the Syrian State." If this larger Arab state were formed, the Arabs "would not be so apprehensive of Jewish expansion, and the Jewish communities now in Palestine would feel safer and more settled" with semi-autonomy within this Arab state.[38]

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[36] Nuri, "Note on the Arab Cause, with Suggestion for the Solution of its Problem," enclosed in Nuri to Casey, 14 Jan. 1943, FO371/34955.

[37] This tactic echoed Rashid Ali's earlier technique of offering wartime participation in return for a Palestine settlement.

[38] Nuri, "Note on the Arab Cause, with Suggestion for the Solution of its Problem," enclosed in Nuri to Casey, 14 Jan. 1943, FO371/34955.

Not only would this united Arab state satisfy Arab nationalist sentiment but it would also be strategically valuable. Nuri echoed an assumption common in British official circles during the war: that one of the most important lessons of the war was the vulnerability of small states, and that the postwar settlement must necessarily involve placing these smaller states into larger regional organizations for their protection. Thus, Nuri appealed to the vision that the movement would not be towards smaller states, as after World War I, but larger states, as a means of justifying Arab unity to the British. Nuri also assumed that Britain would expect the Arab states to provide for their own defense after the war, and argued that a separate and independent Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon would be unable to do so: "If experience has proved that very small States cannot adequately defend themselves and that they constitute a danger to their neighbours and to the peace of the world, then union or federation can justly be imposed on them if these separate States really form one community, linguistically, culturally and economically."[39]

Nuri's suggestions for Arab unity are significant because they reflect the views of one of the moving forces in the movement during World War II. His ideas were widely circulated, both in the Arab world and in British officialdom.[40] The structure and content

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[39] Ibid.

[40] British officials in Iraq and London were agreed that this was an important statement of Nuri's vision for Arab unity. Cornwallis sent 92 copies to London to be distributed to various officials. Cornwallis to Eden, 8 March 1943, FO371/34956. One Foreign Office official suggested that a copy be sent to Washington because Nuri at least conceded that Britain had fulfilled its Mandate obligations to Iraq, which might be to publicize in light of American pressure on India. He also thought it would be useful in demonstrating to the Americans that the Arabs had aspirations as well as the Jews: "This is an illustration of how difficult it may be to apply general principles to a given and complex situation such as the Near East." Minute by Butler, 26 January 1943, FO371/34955. Yet there was also concern that Nuri was trying to assert too much authority. In response to a suggestion that "the time has come to pull Nuri up short,"

of his report reflects the main characteristics of this movement during the war, in particular the way in which Arab leaders saw the issue of Arab nationalism inextricably linked to that of independence for Palestine and Syria. In his report Nuri points out an approaching deadline that preoccupied British officials as well, and signaled a renewed focus on resolving the Palestine issue in 1943. Under the immigration quotas of the 1939 White Paper, the Jews were expected to constitute a third of Palestine's population by 1944. Nuri noted that "His Majesty's Government therefore considered that by 1944 her pledge in the Balfour Declaration would have been fulfilled and a Jewish National Home established in Palestine. All that remained was to establish self-government in Palestine."[41]

Despite Nuri's championing of Arab unity, he faced internal opposition to the plan due to the makeup of Iraq. Both Kurds and Shiahs opposed the move because "The Kurds are apprehensive of a federation of Syria and Iraq, fearing that it will decrease their importance and lead to their interests being even more neglected than they are at present and the Shiahs dislike the idea because they foresee that if put into effect it would reduce them from numerical equality with the Sunnis to the position of a minority."[42] Even within the Sunni community, which generally supported the concept of Arab unity as an

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Peterson observed: "Yes. Iraq's declaration of war has emboldened this little man to be more tiresome than ever." Minutes by Crosthwaite, 26 Jan. 1943 and Peterson, 27 Jan. 1943, FO371/34955.

41 Nuri, "Note on the Arab Cause, with Suggestion for the Solution of its Problem," enclosed in Nuri to Casey, 14 Jan. 1943, FO371/34955.

42 Cornwallis to Peterson, 11 Jan. 1944, FO371/39987. In a later statement, Cornwallis observed that the Shias were put in a difficult position as Arabs but also a religious minority within the larger Arab world: "The Shia leaders are naturally not enthusiastic about the Alexandria Protocol. As good Arab patriots, they must at least give it lip-service, but as sectaries [sic] they are disturbed by the prospect of the Shias becoming a still smaller minority in a still larger Sunni world. They well know that they cannot enlist the support of their Persian co-religionists without appearing unpatriotic, and they are therefore forced into uneasy acquiescence in the official policy." Cornwallis to Eden, 5 Nov. 1944, FO371/39991.

ideal, there was resistance due to the various interests that had developed since the formation of the Arab states after World War I and an unwillingness to sacrifice those interests in the name of unity. Cornwallis observed that "In the questions recently put to the Prime Minister in the Chamber of Deputies, concerning the progress of the discussions which he initiated last summer, the note of challenge was as loud as that of approbation and the Prime Minister was noticeably on the defensive in his replies. He had to admit that he had no mandate from the Cabinet for what he had done and that his action was entirely personal and unofficial." Cornwallis concluded that, "All this is not to say that there is no feeling in favour of Arab Unity but, to take a metaphor from the technique of electricity, it is doubtful whether the current of enthusiasm which this ideal generates has a high enough voltage to overcome the resistance of the circuit along which it will have to flow."[43]

Britain was actively working behind the scenes to slow down the movement for Arab Unity. A Palestinian Arab group approached Nuri about holding a conference to discuss these matters, and Cornwallis feared that, if held in Baghdad, such a conference would radicalize the Iraqi movement.[44] The Minister of State, Casey, agreed, noting that while Britain could not be seen to be openly opposing such a conference, it would most likely not be constructive and would lead to resolutions on Palestine and Syria which would prove to be embarrassing to Britain. He suggested that they offer Arab leaders "friendly advice to slow down the momentum of the movement" and encourage them to undertake consultative meetings before holding a conference. He also proposed that they

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[43] Cornwallis to Peterson, 11 Jan. 1944, FO371/39987.

[44] Cornwallis to FO, 8 March 1943, FO371/34955.

ask Ibn Saud to discourage such a conference, as it would have much less prestige if he did not participate.[45] As the Foreign Office told Cornwallis, they agreed with Lampson that "while we cannot openly oppose conference, we should do our best to discourage its being held at the present time."[46] The official British line was that "much spade-work should first be done" in the form of confidential discussions that might lead to a coherent plan of action before a conference was called.[47]

Arab leaders took this advice, and a number of private meetings between Arab leaders were held in 1943 and early 1944. Egyptian Prime Minister Nahas held bilateral talks in Alexandria first with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri and then with representatives from Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, and the Yemen.[48] The proceedings of the talks were supposed to be kept strictly confidential, but Amin Osman, in his capacity as intermediary between Nahas and the British Embassy in Cairo and with Nahas's permission, passed copies of the proceedings of each meeting on to Lampson. In this manner the British closely monitored the discussions. These transcripts are worth examining in detail because they reveal the inner divisions within the Arab Unity movement and the underlying tension between nationalist rhetoric, local political interests, and the competing visions of Arab leaders for the future of the Middle East.

Despite their public professions of unity, it was well known that the rivalry for leadership of the Arab unity movement between Nuri and Nahas was both national and

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[45] Minister of State Cairo to FO, 25 March 1943, FO371/34956.

[46] FO to Baghdad, 26 March 1943, FO371/34956.

[47] FO to Jedda, 4 May 1943, FO371/34957.

[48] The Gulf states were excluded from these discussions. For a detailed account of each of these meetings, see Ahmed M. Gomaa, *The Foundation of the League of Arab States: Wartime Diplomacy and*

personal.[49] The Iraqi-Egyptian meetings began in July 1943 and were based on Nuri's Blue Book and a questionnaire that Nahas prepared as a response. One of the most important agreements reached at this meeting was an acknowledgement that a single, united Arab state was not viable for both internal and external reasons. Nuri observed that:

> Whether one wants it or not, the formation of an Arab union with a central government is not possible in the current situation, not only because of external challenges, but also because of the internal situation in the Arab states themselves, their differences, the differences that exist between them with respect to economics and culture, without even considering the difficulties mentioned in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the note all prevent us from considering a central government for all. The discussion on this subject is purely theoretical…on agreement between the two parties, it is decided to reject the possibility of a central government.[50]

Once the idea of a large all-encompassing pan-Arab state was rejected, the talks focused on the creation of a Greater Syria, encompassing Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Trans-Jordan, as well as a larger organizational body to which all Arab states could belong. Within this Greater Syria, the rights of minorities, in particular the Maronites of Lebanon and the Jews in Palestine, would be protected, to the extent that they were obliged by the principles established by the Pacte de la Société des Nations. The Jews of Palestine would be given semi-autonomy, but these special privileges would only be applicable within their particular domain.[51]

Inter-Arab Politics 1941 to 1945 (London: Longman, 1977). Gomaa's account is based on both the official British and Arab League documents. See also Porath, Chapter 5.

[49] Cornwallis noted that Nahas "apparently dislikes the Iraqi Prime Minister intensely," and any attempt by Nuri to speed along the proceedings might lead Nahas, out of personal animosity, to try and slow things down. Cornwallis to FO, 21 March 1944, FO371/39987.

[50] Procès-Verbale of the fourth meeting between Nuri and Nahas at Alexandria, 3 Aug. 1943, FO371/34961.

[51] Nuri used the example of the Iraqi Kurds to illustrate his vision for minority rights. The Kurds possessed special rights regarding the use of the Kurdish language, but only within recognized Kurdish

As to the form of the larger organization to which all Arab states might belong, the question was whether this body should have real executive authority, or merely an advisory role. The first option would require the Arab states to limit their individual sovereignty. As this would prove difficult, Nahas suggested an organization modeled on the Pan-American Union, not a political union but one focused on commercial, economic, and cultural cooperation.[52]

These first talks between Nuri and Nahas were significant for setting the stage for future discussions that Nahas held one-on-one with other Arab representatives. In August and September 1943 the Egyptian Prime Minister held similar bilateral talks with the Prime Minister of Transjordan, Tewfik Aboul Huda Pasha in Alexandria. The Transjordanian Prime Minister asked Egypt to support the formation of a Greater Syria including Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Palestine. Once these four states had formed "an independent Syria bloc" they would then be able to join the cooperative union of the other Arab states.[53]

The views of Syria and Lebanon were of particular concern, not only because their struggle with French colonial rule had preoccupied the Arab movement through much of World War II, along with the Palestine issue, but also because it was hoped that they would form the core of a Greater Syria. Nahas pointed out in his December 1943 talks with Syrian representatives, that there would be difficulties with the proposed

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parts of Iraq. If they left these territories, they did not enjoy these privileges. Procès-Verbale of the fifth meeting between Nuri and Nahas at Alexandria, 5 Aug. 1943, FO371/34961.

52 Procès-Verbale of the fourth meeting between Nuri and Nahas at Alexandria, 3 Aug. 1943, FO371/34961.

53 Shone to Eden, 6 Oct. 1943, FO371/34962. This file also includes a copy of the complete Procès-Verbaux of these meetings, again transmitted confidentially to the British Embassy in Cairo by Amin Osman.

unification of the four states into a Greater Syria. The Syrian delegation favored the establishment of a central government, with Damascus serving as the capital, and insisted on the maintenance of a republican form of government, rather than a monarchy. They were particularly concerned with relations between Syria and Lebanon. While Syria did not want to force Lebanon into any agreement against their will, they also stated that "either the relations between the two countries must be based on union or Syria must recover the regions which had been detached from her and the Lebanon would revert to its previous boundaries."[54] Sir Edward Spears, the British representative in Syria, provided insight into the Syrian perspective on these talks. He noted that, on the one hand, the President of Syria was "strongly attached" to Ibn Saud and would prefer not to work against his interests, but at the same time he faced strong Pan-Arab sentiment in Syria.[55]

On their side, the Lebanese delegation reasserted Lebanon's desire to maintain its independence and avoid union with Syria.[56] The Lebanese agreed with Egypt's views on Arab unity, observing that Egypt wanted to avoid being "drawn into the orbit of a pan-Arab consortium of Asiatic States, probably under Iraqi leadership," and preferred that "Egypt should have towards these States something of the same attitude as the South

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[54] Killearn to Eden, 8 Dec. 1943, FO371/34963. The Embassy, in its assessment of these discussions, observed that Syria was courting both Egyptian and Saudi Arabian support for its aspirations: "It will be noticed that the Syrians are greatly flattering the Egyptians in the hope of securing their support in promoting ultimately Arab Union but, it is evident, more particularly the independence in a satisfactory form of the States constituting Greater Syria. It is also interesting to note Saadallah's insistence on the republican regime and the pre-eminence of Damascus. This insistence on a republican regime, which would exclude the Hashemite dynasty from Syria, will of course be agreeable to Ibn Saud."

[55] Spears to Cairo, 22 April 1944, FO371/39988. For Spears, see Max Egremont, *Life of Major-General Sir Edward Spears* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997).

[56] Killearn to Eden, 21 Feb. 1944, FO371/39987 enclosing the procès-verbale of Nahas's talks with the Lebanese delegation.

American Republics had to the United States" rather than being part of an actual Arab Federation. As a result of these expositions of the Syrian and Lebanese positions, the British concluded that Syria was drawing closer to the Iraqi position while Lebanon was aligning itself with Egypt as a means of protecting its newly-won independence.[57] Lebanon declared its intention to remain independent in an official April 1944 public announcement. While willing to "discuss economic, financial or cultural Federation with other Arab States…the Lebanese Government rejected any schemes for the incorporation of the Republic in a Greater Syrian Federation."[58] The other ruler consulted in this round of bilateral talks was the Yemen, whose representatives believed that Arab unity was not practicable and would have a negative affect on the region.[59]

While Nuri and Nahas were forging ahead with plans for an Arab conference, Ibn Saud was serving as a brake to the movement. The British found Ibn Saud's cautious attitude useful as a means of preventing a conference from being held at an inopportune moment, because "the prestige of any conference would be considerably diminished if he declined to participate."[60] Ibn Saud informed the British Minister in Jedda that he was skeptical of the motives of the Arab leaders pushing for a conference and "He trusts only His Majesty's Government and he will only act in concert with them. If His Majesty's Government consider it advisable in genuine interests of all concerned, he is prepared to do what he can."[61] The movement for Arab unity put Ibn Saud in a difficult position. On the one hand, as ruler of the historical home of Islam, he could not be seen to be actively

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57 Col. G.W. Furlonge to Spears, 21 Jan. 1944, FO371/39987.
58 Spears to Eden, 28 April 1944, FO371/39988.
59 Killearn to Eden, 16 March 1944, FO371/39987.
60 Minister of State Cairo to FO, 25 March 1943, FO371/34956.

opposing the movement. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia's response to the Arab unity movement was tempered by the long-standing rivalry between Ibn Saud and the Hashemites.

After the conclusion of Egypt's preliminary talks with each individual country, the British grew increasingly concerned that Nuri was determined to move on to the next step, an actual Arab conference. Despite Britain's grave reservations about such a conference, the general consensus was that it would be unwise to oppose it.[62] Britain's representative in Syria, Spears, wrote that "with so many purely Arab factors operating in the form we desire …it would be most inadvisable to come out too openly against the conference, thus laying ourselves open to the charge of inconstancy and of having killed the Arab seedling after ostentatiously watering it for months."[63] There were some Arab leaders who were in line with British policy because it was in their own interests, and therefore they could rely on them to moderate the movement without overt British interference. Eden's primary concern was that the Palestine issue not be raised at such a conference. Given the challenges Nahas faced in getting the various national delegations to reach agreement in their bilateral talks, he was worried that the delegates to a joint conference might, when faced with difficulties, "seek an easy way out by blaming others for the impossibility of finding a solution."[64] The British then tried to undertake safeguards to ensure that the issue would be dealt with in a moderate tone. Lampson spoke with Amin Osman on these lines, asking him to urge Nahas to "go slow" in calling

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61 Wikeley to FO, 26 April 1943, FO371/34957.

62 See for example Killearn to FO, 24 Feb. 1944 and Cornwallis to Peterson, 11 Jan. 1944, FO371/39987.

63 Spears to Cairo, 22 April 1944, FO371/39988.

for an Arab Conference: “I was frankly not at all anxious that it should appear through our action -- or inaction -- that suggested conference was held up: nor was it in accordance with Nahas Pasha's own policy or to his personal interest that it should seem so -- Nahas Pasha had much better let the idea quietly peter out.” To strengthen his argument, Lampson pointed out that Nuri had left office and therefore Nahas no longer faced competition for leadership of the movement and could justify stalling the conference.[65]

The Formation of the Arab League

While the British were trying to delay the convening of an Arab conference, the Arab leaders, and Nahas in particular, were hoping to speed up the process. In June 1944 Nahas sent a letter to the Arab governments calling for delegates to be sent to a preparatory meeting with a sense of urgency: “Public interest necessitates acceleration of Arab unity scheme so that events which today quickly succeed one another should not outstrip us.”[66] The rapidly changing events to which he referred were the developments of the war during the Summer of 1944: the Normandy invasion, the upcoming American presidential elections, and the possibility of an armistice in the near future made it urgent for the Arabs to organize themselves to prepare a united front for the post-war conferences.[67] Nahas also had personal reasons for pushing the Arab unity agenda, as his

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64 FO to Cairo, 2 March 1944, FO371/39987.

65 Killearn to FO, 5 June 1944, FO371/39988. Lampson also suggested to Amin Osman that Nahas might look to Ibn Saud’s “wise attitude” towards Arab unity as a model.

66 Summary of draft letter from Nahas to Arab leaders, included in Killearn to FO, 14 June 1944, FO371/39988.

67 Killearn to FO, 26 July 1944, FO371/39989.

internal power in Egypt was rapidly eroding. He also feared opposition from within the Arab unity movement that aimed to undermine his leadership.[68]

Now that the bilateral talks had been concluded, Nahas proposed that a preparatory committee meet in Egypt in late summer to lay the groundwork for a general Arab conference.[69] The Foreign Office concluded that, after the invitations had been sent out, they could not "openly oppose" the meeting, but they could "try to steer its activities in the direction of economic and cultural co-operation."[70] Killearn was instructed that if any of the countries sending representatives appeared to be having second thoughts, he should encourage them to suggest postponement. He was also to remind Nahas that "There must of course be no unsuitable resolutions and no tendentious public speeches on either of these points."[71]

One of the outstanding issues to be resolved before the preparatory conference could be held was that of representation. Should the conference only include independent Arab states, or could representatives of those states still under European imperial rule be admitted as well? The two Palestinian Arab leaders that the organizers hoped would attend the conference were in British custody in South Africa. Nahas instituted an

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[68] Killearn reported that "According to a report from an agent Nahas has been advised that the Iraqis, Syrians, and the Lebanese are getting together to make a united front against him, their idea being to come to Egypt with a concerted policy, to produce some sort of academic ending of the conversations here and then themselves to get busy with the conference amongst themselves without Nahas." Killearn to FO, 26 July 1944, FO371/39989.

[69] Killearn to FO, 14 June 1944, FO371/39988. Nahas had submitted a draft of this letter to Lampson, and Smart admonished Amin Osman for allowing Nahas to send the letter before Lampson had given his feedback. Killearn to FO, 22 June 1944, FO371/39988.

[70] Minute by Baxter, 29 June 1944, FO371/39988.

[71] FO to Killearn, 3 July 1944, FO371/39988.

unsuccessful campaign to get them released.[72] Britain's unwillingness to compromise on this issue led to one of the most direct confrontations between Nahas and Killearn, with the Egyptian Prime Minister telling the Ambassador that Britain was "not being helpful. It would be so easy for us to make a gesture which would not alter the position in any way but which would appease Palestinians."[73]

Once again, Saudi participation proved to be not only an obstacle to the organizers of an Arab conference, but also an opportunity for the British to exert a moderating influence on the proceedings. Early in the discussions about holding a preparatory conference, Ibn Saud informed Nahas that he would only send representatives to a conference if three conditions were met: 1) his "special position in the Arab world" must be acknowledged and no other Arab ruler given priority over him; 2) no decisions embarrassing to the Allies in wartime should be made; and 3) while he did not object to a Greater Syria being formed as long as the Hashemite family was not put in charge, he did object to Syria, Lebanon, or Palestine being joined to either Egypt or Iraq. This reassertion of the maintenance of their independence thus put him in line with the Lebanese position on this issue.[74] Once he actually received the invitation, Ibn Saud asked British representatives if he should participate or not. The official response was: "Although it appears to us that the present most intense moment of the war is not the best time for the proposed meeting, we appreciate that the Arab Governments may look on the matter differently and may be reluctant to contemplate a postponement…Should

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[72] Summary of draft letter from Nahas to Arab leaders, included in Killearn to FO, 14 June 1944, FO371/39988.

[73] One of the detainees was dying of cancer, and Nahas argued that he could be brought to Cairo to join his family and be kept under close observation. Killearn to FO, 31 July 1944, FO371/39989.

conference take place we should prefer that His Majesty be represented."[75] By early August Ibn Saud had definitively decided not to send a representative, but then changed his mind when the Democratic Party in the United States issued a statement in support of Jewish settlement in Palestine. Ibn Saud was convinced that the conference was not a good idea but he also feared the Arab response if he refused to participate in light of growing pro-Zionist sentiment in the United States.[76]

The Preparatory Committee met from September 25-October 5, 1944 in Alexandria with representatives from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Yemen.[77] Musa Alami, a lawyer who represented Palestine at the 1939 London Conference, was invited to serve as the Palestinian Arab observer to the proceedings. The first major point of disagreement was the ultimate form of the union to be established. Did the Arab states truly desire a "Central Government for all the Arab World" with the surrender of state sovereignty that this would entail? Only Syria supported this concept, and the committee decided that the idea of a unified Arab

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74 Jordan, British Legation Jedda to Eden, 15 March 1944, FO371/39987.

75 FO to Jedda, 13 July 1944, FO371/39988.

76 Jordan to Eden, 3 August 1944, FO371/39989. Ibn Saud's extended consultations with Britain on this issue reflected more than just Saudi concern for Allied interests. In exasperation Lord Moyne repeated that Britain had already told the Saudi ruler that the decision was up to him and Britain refused to be used as a scapegoat: "His Majesty's Government could not put themselves in the position of having advised Ibn Saud to stay away from the conference, and thereby lay themselves open to the charge of having taken steps which might wreck plans of the Arab countries to hold it." Ibn Saud's personal secretary, Yusuf Yassin, "was trying very hard to get definite advice as to whether Ibn Saud should or not send representatives and thereby saddle us with the responsibility of the decision." Moyne to FO, 31 Aug. 1944, FO371/39990. After extensive correspondence between Nahas and Ibn Saud's son the King agreed to send a representative. The correspondence between Ibn Saud's son and Nahas can be found in FO371/39990.

77 A complete English translation of the process verbal for the Preparatory Committee meetings is included in Killearn to Eden, 22 Dec. 1944, FO371/45235. Essentially a transcript of the discussions, this

political state was not feasible. Riadh Solh Bey, the Lebanese delegate, was anxious to preserve his country's newly-won independence from France, and came out most strongly against the idea of a central state, declaring the idea "impracticable" and suggesting that "we should base our work on respect for the independence and sovereignty of every Arab state." [78] After unanimously rejecting the idea of a central government, the delegates discussed the points on which cooperation could be accepted, in particular economic, cultural, and social issues.[79]

The two biggest challenges were Greater Syria and Palestine. While Nuri had long cherished the idea of a Greater Syria, implementation proved impossible. Not only had the delegation just promised to respect Lebanese independence, but Transjordan and Palestine were still formally under British mandates.[80] The delegates from Syria and

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document reveals the lines of debate in the meetings and is an invaluable source for studying the founding of the Arab League.

78 Minutes of the third session of the Preparatory Committee, 1 Oct. 1944, FO371/45235.

79 Minutes of the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee, 2 Oct. 1944, FO371/45235. Shone, in talks with some of the delegates, found that the apparent support for Lebanese independence came about as a result of a real point of contention. Nahas suggested that each delegate circulate the procès-verbaux from their bilateral talks with him to the other delegates. They all agreed to do so, but the record of Nahas's talks with Syrian representatives included negative comments about the Maronite and Jewish communities and the threat that if Lebanon did not join Greater Syria then Syria would reclaim the land it had lost when the Lebanese state was established. Shone to Eden, 10 Oct. 1944, FO371/45235. In private conversations with the Minister of State, delegates revealed that while Lebanese independence was recognized in the protocol, provisions preventing member states from making foreign policy agreements with other states against the interest of the League were intended to serve as a threat against Lebanon if she entered into agreements with France. In this event, the league would no longer recognize her borders and would support Syria in reclaiming the Muslim districts that had been joined to the new Lebanese state. Moyne to Eden, 19 Oct. 1944, FO371/39991.

80 Transjordan was in a transitional stage during World War II. It was still formally under British Mandate control, but Britain allowed the country a certain amount of freedom of action with the understanding that it would be fully independent after the war. Yet this placed Transjordan in a difficult position with respect to the Arab unity negotiations, as the Transjordanian representative pointed out: "On the one hand she is considered independent, on the other hand she is bound by a firm treaty which is equivalent to the provisions of the mandate. Thus at the same time as she has been allowed to conclude agreements with other States and to accept and appoint Consuls, thus acquiring the semblance of independence, she still finds herself prevented from directing her foreign affairs freely." Minutes of the sixth session of the Preparatory Committee, 4 Oct. 1944, FO371/45235. Hankey at the Foreign Office

Transjordan expressed the deep desires of their two countries to join together, with the Transjordanian representative declaring that he has always considered the country to be properly part of Syria. Yet even the union of these two countries faced significant hurdles, as Transjordan was a monarchy and Syria had repeatedly asserted its intention to maintain a republican form of government.[81] The vision of a Greater Syria encompassing these four territories never came to fruition.

The committee then reached the most contentious issue of all, the future of Palestine. El Sayed Musa el Alami, the Palestinian observer, presented a long speech on the Palestine issue. The foundation of his argument was that Britain had not carried through on the promises of the 1939 White Paper in three main areas: quotas on Jewish immigration, halting the sale of Arab-owned land, and establishing constitutional rule. According to al-Alami, the decision to reject the White Paper in 1939 was that of the Arabs as a whole, and could not therefore be blamed on the Palestinians alone. He also argued that during the July 1940 Newcombe mission to Baghdad, the Palestinian representatives "accepted co-operation with the English on the basis of the White Paper and on their side they accepted certain modifications in its provisions." As to the charge often made that the Arabs finally accepted the White Paper only when Britain was winning the war, he pointed out that the decision was made in the summer of 1940, when the situation was at its worse. From the Palestinian perspective, then, he concluded: "On

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explained the British position: "The mandate is still in force, but as the mandates in Syria and the Lebanon are being wound up, we have promised the Amir of Transjordan that a new regime will be introduced after the war and that meanwhile his position will in fact approximate to what it will be after the war so far as possible. On the other hand, we are still responsible for the conduct of Transjordan foreign relations and if the Amir Abdullah does anything silly it is we who are formally responsible." Minute by Hankey, 7 Feb. 1945, FO371/45236.

[81] Minutes of the sixth session of the Preparatory Committee, 4 Oct. 1944, FO371/45235.

our part, we consider that Baghdad agreement of 1940 as still holding good and that England is bound by it."[82]

Al Alami did not limit his criticism to the British. He also accused the other Arab states of standing by and allowing illegal immigration and Arab land to be sold, calling them to rally to Palestine's aid: "If you ask me how this came to pass, I will tell you with all due respect that this is due to the fact that we were left by our brethren to fight this international battle alone, while they stood looking on…If the Arabs wish Palestine to remain to the Arabs, they must protect the remaining Arab land and fight the Jews with their own weapons." As a solution, al Alami suggested that the Arab states establish a fund to buy land for the Arabs in Palestine, and also establish propaganda bureaus in London and Washington to influence public opinion in Britain and the United States.[83]

This series of preliminary meetings resulted in the Alexandria Protocol, signed on October 7, 1944 by the delegates. It included a resolution to form a "Council of the League of Arab States" that would serve as a representative body. One of the main issues debated was whether or not the decisions of the council would be binding. The compromise reached was that the decisions would only be binding on the states that accepted them, unless states submitted an issue for arbitration by the council in which case the decision would be binding on all parties concerned. Member states would not be allowed to use violence against other states. The protocol left room for future developments to strengthen these ties between the Arab states. It also included a statement about Palestine, declaring the support of the Arab states for Palestine and

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[82] Minutes of the seventh session of the Preparatory Committee, 5 Oct. 1944, FO371/45235.
[83] Ibid.

calling on Britain to hold to the promises of the White Paper with respect to halting Jewish immigration, protecting Arab land, and moving Palestine towards independence. To support the cause of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine, the idea of creating an "Arab national fund for the preservation of the Arab lands of Palestine" would be considered.[84] A commission of experts would be assembled to examine points of economic and cultural cooperation and draw up plans for the founding of an Arab League, at which point the committee would reconvene to approve their work and convoke an Arab Congress.[85]

British officials viewed the provisions of the Alexandria Protocol, and the development of the Arab unity movement that it represented, as both a real opportunity and a potential liability. Lord Moyne, the Minister of State, observed that the protocol represented an Arab world with "one orientation, and one only, towards the outside world." He believed that at present this orientation was "that of co-operation with Great Britain. The Middle East group as a whole is willing, and indeed anxious, to co-operate with Great Britain on the basis of independence and free association."[86] Cornwallis affirmed this view, noting that Nuri and the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs assured him that the goal of the conference was "to unite the Arab World in co-operation with Britain."[87] However, this orientation could change. Reflecting the developing idea of the post-war bi-polar world, Moyne warned that the Soviet Union could become the focus of this orientation if Britain and the other western powers did not meet some of the Arabs' post-war demands. The "all or nothing" implications of this unity meant that it could

84 English translation of the "Protocol signed at Alexandria on the 7th October, 1944," FO371/39991.

85 Shone to FO, 8 Oct. 1944, FO371/39990.

86 Moyne to Eden, 19 Oct. 1944, FO371/39991.

either work to Britain's benefit, by bringing the whole Arab bloc behind them, or it could work against them: "We must realise, in my view, that, if His Majesty's Government is forced to adopt local policies in any part of the Middle East which are unacceptable to the majority of the Middle Eastern opinion, there is risk of the whole orientation of the Arab bloc of countries being changed to some other direction which might or might not be acceptable to us."[88] Cornwallis echoed this sentiment, warning that the Arab Unity Conference:

> presents us with a crisis. If we are ready to support the plan fully and openly, and to respond to the invitation which has been given to us to act as the guide and mentor of the Arab World, then I see every reason to hope that Imperial interests in the Middle East will be maintained and safeguarded more surely than ever before, and that a period of stability and prosperity lies before us.
>
> If, on the other hand, we are not willing or able to do so, then, whatever advantages we may reap elsewhere, we shall, I feel, suffer in this part of the world a blow which will not only involve us and the Middle East in unrest, violence and confusion, but in the eyes of its inhabitants will abase our honour and prestige irreparably.[89]

British officials in the region believed that, if Britain would follow through on the White Paper on Palestine and support Syrian and Lebanese independence, they could maintain the good will of the Arabs in the post-war world. The Committee's endorsement of the White Paper meant that "the Palestinian Arabs are now committed to an acceptance of the White Paper, and that we have the general support of the Arab World for the policy it enshrined… it means equally that any serious divergence from that policy will confront

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87 Cornwallis to Eden, 5 Nov. 1944, FO371/39991.

88 Moyne to Eden, 19 Oct. 1944, FO371/39991. Shone makes a similar argument from the perspective of the Embassy in Cairo in Shone to Eden, 10 Oct. 1944, FO371/39991.

89 Cornwallis to Eden, 5 Nov. 1944, FO371/39991.

His Majesty's Government not only with the hostility of the Palestine Arabs, but with that of all the signatories to the Alexandria Protocol."[90]

The British viewed both the Alexandria Protocol and the meetings that culminated in the first Arab League meeting as attempts by the Arab states to work within the framework of international diplomacy. As Lord Moyne observed after the signing of the Alexandria Protocol, "the States of the Middle East have not been slow to learn the new technique of international co-operation developed in war-time United Nations conferences…'Regionalism' is in the air, and it is noteworthy that it should be the newly-developed States of the Middle East who have taken the lead in attempting to work out a practical scheme of regional co-operation."[91] From the Arab perspective, the Arab unity movement experienced a tactical shift in 1944, in response to the apparent approaching end of the war. Before 1944 the movement had primarily aimed to win concessions on Palestine and Syrian and Lebanese independence. The events of the summer of 1944 signaled a switch, with the movement focusing on developing means of protecting the Arab states in the face of post-war settlements and preserving their interests in light of the growing movement for regional and international organizations. There was talk of developing a Middle East Regional Council, and the Arab states believed that by organizing themselves and taking the initiative they would be better able to represent their interests if such an organization was ever established. As one British official

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Moyne to Eden, 19 Oct. 1944, FO371/39991.

observed, “the Pan-Arab movement stands with many Arabs not so much for the union of Arabs among themselves as for the cooperation of Arabs against the outside world.”[92]

What was the internal response to these developments? After noting the reservations of the Shias and Kurds, Cornwallis reported that the general Iraqi public was “flattered and pleased” by the result: “It has made them feel that it is something after all to be an Arab; and Arab Unity undoubtedly appeals to the Iraqis very much as the reunion of Christendom appeals to Christians, namely as an ideal which, if incapable of immediate realisation, is nevertheless devoutedly to be wished.”[93] Soon after the signing of the protocol Egypt, Transjordan, and Syria all experienced changes of government, the fall of the very governments that had signed the new agreement. The governments fell due to internal domestic issues; in fact, Nahas’s government would have fallen earlier if Farouk had not allowed it to finish the discussions in Alexandria. Axis propaganda capitalized on this situation by charging Britain with planning the fall of the governments in response to the Arab unity movement.[94]

After the Alexandria Protocol was signed in October 1944, the various subcommittees and commissions set up to consider the mechanics of the planned Arab League met in preparation for the reconvening of the Preparatory Committee in February 1945. In the meantime, the various Arab states, under the guise of the unity proclaimed in the Alexandria Protocol, maneuvered for influence. Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt entered into talks to consider a treaty of alliance between the three countries, partly in

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92 Elphinstone, Chatham House, undated draft paper on Arab Unity, included in Elphinstone to Baxter, 6 March 1945, FO371/45237.

93 Cornwallis to Eden, 5 Nov. 1944, FO371/39991.

94 Moyne to Eden, 19 Oct. 1944, FO371/39991.

response to Nuri's opposition to some of Ibn Saud's stipulations for participation in the preliminary conference.[95] The old Saudi-Hashemite rivalry was revived, and the British were concerned that the proposed treaty would be a means of further isolating the Hashemite kingdoms within the new league.[96] The Lebanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, in response to Iraqi attempts to push a closer federation between the signatories of the Alexandria Protocol, declared that the Lebanese "were Lebanese before being Arabs and must remain independent."[97] Killearn was greatly troubled by these internal divisions, particularly the fact that the Hashemites were being "relegated to the background." Britain had an obligation to the Hashemites for their role in World War I and their "stabilizing influence in Transjordan and Iraq," and he argued that it was in Britain's interest to intervene as these internal divisions within the Arab world made it vulnerable to Soviet penetration and "balkanisation," which would be a real challenge to Britain's interests in the region.[98] Youssef Salem, a Lebanese Minister complained to Smart that

> the trouble was that the various Arab States were not actuated by motives of Arab union but by motives of internal policy. King Farouk was attracted by the idea of being the principal personage in the Arab world. Iraq wanted to have the premier role itself and to unit the Fertile Crescent in a Hashemite Empire. Ibn Saud merely wanted to wreck any northern confederation. Syria was thinking mainly of a

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95 Grafftey-Smith to FO, 12 March 1945, FO371/45237.

96 Killearn to Eden, 23 March 1945, FO371/45237.

97 Killearn to FO, 21 Feb. 1945, FO371/45236.

98 Killearn to Eden, 23 March 1945, FO371/45237. Foreign Office officials did not agree. The views of Vyvyan Holt, the former Oriental Counsellor at the British Embassy in Baghdad and now a member of the Eastern Department, are of interest because he worked closely with the Hashemite rulers of Iraq. In response to Lampson's suggestion, he wrote: "I cannot agree that it has yet been shown that the Hashemites have been 'relegated to the background' they have merely been put in their proper place. This is a good thing and it would be, in my opinion, a mistake to try to prop them up in a position which they cannot maintain unaided." As for the debt owed them for World War I, Holt observed: "We have long since liquidated our debt to them with high interest." Minute by Holt, 29 March 1945, FO371/45237.

republican regime in order to forestall a Hashemite monarchy. The Emir Abdullah was only dreaming of a union of Syria and Transjordan with him as King.[99]

Despite these divisions, the reconvened Preparatory Committee approved the proposals for the new Arab League in a single session. On March 22 the "Covenant of the Arab League" was signed by delegates of Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the Lebanon.[100] The Covenant declared that "The object of the League is to strengthen relations between member States, to co-ordinate their political action with a view to ensuring collaboration between them and protection of their independence and sovereignty, and generally to consider all questions concerning the Arab countries and their interests." The council of the Arab League would hold regular meetings twice a year, with each member state having one vote and the presidency of the council rotating among the member states. The permanent seat of the League would be in Cairo. A Secretariat General was also established, with a Secretary-General to be appointed by the council.[101] Abdel Rahman Azzam Bey of Egypt was chosen to serve as the first Secretary-General.[102] The Covenant also included Annexes addressing the Palestine issue, calling for Palestinian independence and participation in the Arab League, and providing a mechanism for cooperation with non-member Arab countries.[103]

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99 Minute by Smart, 20 March 1945, FO371/45238.

100 Palestine would have an observer to participate in the meetings but not an official representative. Representatives of the Yemen did not sign the Covenant on site but a copy was sent to the Yemen to be signed there after consultation with the government. Killearn to FO, 19 March 1945 and Killearn to FO, 23 March 1945, FO371/45237.

101 English translation of the Covenant of the Arab League, enclosed in Killearn to Eden, 12 April 1945, FO371/45238.

102 For Azzam's early career, see Ralph M. Coury, *The Making of an Egyptian Arab Nationalist: The Early Years of Azzam Pasha, 1893-1936.*

103 English translation of the Covenant of the Arab League, enclosed in Killearn to Eden, 12 April 1945, FO371/45238. A British official described the annex on Palestine as a "deplorable production,"

After the official signing, the Preparatory Committee was then transformed into the first formal meeting of the Arab League. The British were surprised at the speed with which the Covenant was agreed upon and signed. As one official noted: "A collection of European states would hardly have produced anything more impressive."[104] One of the Iraqi representatives admitted that "preoccupation of all concerned with preparations for San Francisco Conference" was largely responsible for expediting proceedings of Preparatory Committee."[105] Yet the league faced real challenges from the beginning, with the Palestinian observer, Musa al Alami, complaining to Smart only days after the signing of the Covenant that "the League had now been reduced to a debating society."[106] The plan for an Arab League-sponsored propaganda plan for Britain and the United States was scrapped due to disagreements between members as to what line of argument to follow.[107] The conflicts grew so intense that by December 1945 Nuri was pushing the Iraqi Prime Minister to withdraw from the League due to his personal disagreements with the Secretary-General.[108]

Why, given all the time and effort expended on the issue of Arab Federation, the cultural, geographic, and religious ties between the Arab states, and the artificiality of their borders, did Arab Federation never come around, did the Arab League become a relatively weak organization, and any attempts at union ultimately fail? How did a

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while the annex addressing cooperation with non-member states could "frighten the French a lot if it gets applied to French N. Africa." Minute by Hankey, 27 April 1945, FO371/45238.

104 Minute by Hankey, 27 March 1945, FO371/45237.

105 Killearn to FO, 19 March 1945, FO371/45237.

106 Minute by Smart, 20 March 1945, FO371/45238.

107 Killearn to Campbell, 7 April 1945, FO371/45238.

108 The Prime Minister refused Nuri's request. Stonehewer Bird to FO, 5 Dec. 1945, FO371/45241.

movement that seemed to have so much promise fail so miserably? One answer is the great divide between the political rhetoric of Arab unity, and the *Realpolitik* of national administration and vested political interests. In a prescient comment in a 1939 memo on Arab Federation, the Eastern Department had observed:

> The Ministers and officials composing the Administration of such a country as Iraq are like Ministers and officials elsewhere, in that they try to make the best political and economic bargains they can for the community which they represent, without letting sentimental ideas about Arab brotherhood interfere over much with their aims or reflecting too closely upon the precise composition of that community…Arab brotherhood is soon forgotten whenever the Iraqi Government, for example, employ a Syrian or a Palestinian or an Egyptian for a post which an Iraqi thinks he himself could fill.[109]

The report conceded that "a genuine national sentiment" existed in Egypt and Iraq, but not in the other Arab states: "An Arab from Damascus…may and probably does have a fellow-feeling for those of the same local origin as himself, and a feeling of loyalty—if he is a tribesman—for his tribal chief. But it is unlikely that his emotions are profoundly stirred by the Republic of Syria."[110] The vagueness of the idea of Arab Federation was both a strength and weakness, since Arab leaders could support the idea without being committed to any concrete plan. As Gibb noted, "The strength of Arab nationalism lies in the fact that, with few exceptions, every leader and every party in the Arab countries

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[109] Eastern Department "Memorandum respecting Arab Federation," Sept. 28, 1939, FO 371/27045. Gershoni and Jankowski make a similar point, in the context of Egyptian politicians in the 1930s, about what they call "the considerable gap between this rhetorical acceptance of, but practical reserve about, a more supra-Egyptianist regional stance on the part of Egyptian politicians. In part it can be attributed to the gap between rhetoric and praxis which is observable, perhaps even normal, in many political situations." Egyptian politicians in power might adopt pan-Arab language to win popular support, and yet the reality of power made them hesitant to actually implement policies that would limit national sovereignty: "In brief, Egypt's political leadership came to speak in more supra-Egyptian terms largely because they were under pressure to do so; thus their rhetorical commitment considerably exceeded their practical enthusiasm." Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian nation, 1930-1945*, 165-166.

[110] Eastern Department "Memorandum respecting Arab Federation," Sept. 28, 1939, FO 371/27045.

accepts its programme in general outline. Its weakness lies partly in the vagueness of this programme…"[111]

The movement for Arab unity in the later war years, despite its failure as a viable political alternative for the Middle East, succeeded in forcing Britain to address the issue of Syrian and Lebanese independence if not that of Palestine, and to define its post-war demands for the region. It is a significant example of regional politics within the new framework of international diplomacy emerging in the post-war period. Like the later non-aligned movement, it demonstrated that states under formal or informal colonial rule were discovering ways to work within this international system and manipulate it to further their national interests.

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[111] H.A.R. Gibb's paper on "Arab Federation," 9 June 1941, FO 371/27044.

Chapter 11: Quitting the Arena: The Post-War Transition[1]

During World War II British officials usually made decisions about the Middle East based on short-term expediency, taking action that would protect British interests and stability in the region as much as possible with minimal diversion of troops and supplies from the warfront. In the closing months of the war, British, Iraqi, and Egyptian officials all turned their attention to long-term issues, in particular the future of Anglo-Iraqi and Anglo-Egyptian relations. Britain's relationship with both Egypt and Iraq had been defined by the treaties of alliance. British officials saw an even greater role for Britain in the Middle East after the war than provided for in these treaties. [2] But, as Ambassador Cornwallis pointed out, at the same time "We must expect after the war a tendency in all Arab countries to get rid of wartime controls and to whittle down foreign privileges."[3] Iraqi and Egyptian leaders saw the end of hostilities as a chance to push for revision of the Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Iraqi Treaties that limited their sovereignty. The British wrestled with defining a post-war vision for British requirements in the region in light of these local nationalist demands.

Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Iraqi relations were further complicated by other considerations, such as growing American and Soviet interests and involvement in the region, and the discussions regarding postwar international organizations. It was no longer a question of balancing two sides in these negotiations, the British and the

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[1] R. Howe reported that the Egyptian Ambassador to London told him that "We should quit the arena but this does not mean that we should quit Egypt." Memorandum by R. Howe, 10 Sept. 1945, FO371/45925.

[2] With respect to Iraq, see for example Peterson to Cornwallis, 19 Feb. 1944, FO371/40079.

Egyptian or Iraqi, but now it required juggling these other interests as well. In Egypt, the British rightly feared that the political model of the three-legged stool, consisting of the Palace, Wafd, and Britain, which had served them so well thus far, might acquire some unwieldy and inconvenient appendages in the post-war world. In Iraq the concern was that Britain's support for the "old gang" of Iraqi politicians would push opposition elements into the arms of a nebulous "communism."

The solution to this dilemma of how best to maintain British influence in light of local nationalist demands and American and Soviet pressure was to develop a new cover for British intervention: economic relations and British expertise. Strengthening the Anglo-Iraqi bond could be accomplished by building up Britain's commercial relations with Iraq, and providing "first-rate British officials" to serve there.[4] In Egypt it took the form of a push for social reform, and then providing the experts needed to carry these reforms through.

British strategic planning for the post-war period and US-Soviet Interests

The British had difficulty agreeing on what exactly their strategic requirements would be in the post-war Middle East. The Embassy in Cairo began pressing London to define these requirements as early as 1943. Ambassador Killearn argued: "There is danger in a negative and undefined attitude. The chances are that, as the war approaches its end, and its dangers become less and less imminent to the peoples of the Near and Middle East, we shall be faced with ebullitions of popular and nationalist unrest." In typical fashion, his response was for firmness and clearly laying out British demands: "If

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3 Cornwallis to Peterson, 19 March 1944, FO371/40079.

4 Cornwallis to Eden, 9 Jan. 1945, FO371/45302.

firmly and sympathetically handled, these ebullitions may be canalised and prevented from assuming the dimensions of popular outbreaks. But the successful handling of these problems will depend greatly on our being able to make unmistakably clear what are our intentions, that they are reasonable and that we are able and determined to give effect to them."[5] Clarifying British intentions, given the large number of considerations involved, proved to be easier said than done.

British military officials concluded that their postwar strategic requirements would involve even greater concessions from Egypt and Iraq with respect to the stationing of British troops in these countries. The challenge was how to sell this to local governments. The Foreign Office observed that, with respect to Egypt, "it is clear that these requirements of our Service Depts will remain quite unacceptable to the Egyptians until we have proved to them that our demands are not only compatible with Egyptian independence but essential for its maintenance."[6]The military authorities accordingly tried to convince both Egypt and Iraq that it was in their own interests to continue the "partnership" with Britain. They argued that Egypt and Iraq could not defend themselves; that only a great power could afford the "great technical complexity and expense of modern war"; and while they would require bases, they would not need a large number of permanent troops to man them. Britain also pointed out that troops could not be moved into Egypt at short notice so it was in Egyptian interests to keep British troops there even in peacetime. Finally they took the line that the true interests of both countries lay with Britain: "it is only to Great Britain that these countries can look for help in their national

5 Killearn to Eden, 31 Jan. 1943, FO371/35529.

6 Minute by Coverley Price, 1 Jan. 1946, FO371/45929.

defence, since she is the only great power whose interests coincide with theirs and who, as an ally, would be willing to come to their aid."[7]

The Oriental Counsellor in Cairo, Sir Walter Smart, took a rather radical line in these discussions. At a time when British military authorities were calling for an even greater British military presence in the region, Smart called for a scaling back: "I think it is time we became more realist and less slow off the mark, if we want to preserve our position in the M.E. What we should aim for is troops in Cyrenaica and Palestine and positions for military, naval and air occupation in case of danger of war-these positions to be maintained by Egyptian forces in peace-time with British liaison officers or civilians technicians looking after them." Smart admitted that this idea was "heresy and would horrify our military but I have had a long experience of them through several treaty negotiations, and know too well how they stick to ideas long out of date. We cannot oppose Russian penetration and U.S. competition in the M.E. and take on at the same time hostile M.E. countries."[8] Britain would have to choose her battles wisely.

If the period after World War I saw the proliferation of nation-states, British planners envisioned a post-World War II world in which these small states would seek the protection of larger ones. This was one of the underlying motifs in the discussion of postwar British desiderata in the Middle East. Ambassador Stonehewer Bird, for example, noted with respect to Iraq in 1945: "This war has proved to all thinking people in Iraq, as elsewhere, that small nations cannot hope to stand alone, and that they must have some strong protector and ally. In the case of Iraq, there is no question whatever that

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[7] Howe made all of these points as "talking points" in a note to Sir Alan Brooke who was planning a visit to Cairo and Baghdad. Howe to Sir Alan Brooke, 5 Oct. 1945, FO141/1053.

that protector is and will continue to be Great Britain."[9] In the Ambassador's estimation, this provided both an opportunity for greater intervention and also new challenges to the façade of nonintervention: "The Iraqi Government will, it seems to me, do everything they can to draw closer the links which bind us together. At the same time they will be more than ever anxious to maintain every outward aspect of sovereignty and independence."[10]

Growing American and Soviet influence in the Middle East was another recurrent theme in British dispatches from the later war years. British officials in Egypt and Iraq viewed this encroachment on their turf with a combination of alarm and resignation. Some officials viewed this development with a certain pragmatism. Walter Smart observed, "I think we must take it for granted that we shall not be allowed to be so politically exclusive as we have been in the Egypto-Arab world during the period between the two wars." Given this threat, it was even more imperative that Britain "should gain the maximum amount of local acquiescence as is compatible with our strategical interests" to balance these new interests.[11] At the same time, Smart suggested an active response: "what we really ought to do is to tell the United states and Russia that we are going to take or hold what we require for our strategic requirements in the Middle East…This could not, of course, be said officially but we could make it quite clear, just a

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8 Minute by Smart, 8 Dec. 1945, FO141/1043/761/80/45.

9 Stonehewer Bird to Eden, 7 May 1945, FO371/45302. Scrivener, the head of the Egyptian Department, made a similar point with respect to Egypt earlier in the war: "If this war has proved anything it is that no small nation can resist a large one which is sufficiently powerful, swift, and ruthless, and that--to apply this to Egypt--Egypt by her unaided efforts will be unable to assure the defence of the Canal in fourteen years or even a hundred and fourteen. In fact the principles of Article 8 of the treaty must continue as indefinitely as the alliance." Minute by Scrivener on "Post-war Egypt," 27 March 1942, FO 371/31588.

10 Stonehewer Bird to Eden, 7 May 1945, FO371/45302.

the United States and Russia make it pretty clear to us what they are going to hang on to for their strategic requirements."[12] Some officials put this in terms of a sort of British "Monroe Doctrine" for the Eastern Mediterranean.[13] Cornwallis advocated a combination of British retrenchment and concessions to Iraq: "In these circumstances, it obviously behooves us to take nothing for granted. We must be zealous in preserving the predominant political position which we have gained, and in so acting we must realize that the Iraqis have grown up and must be treated as adults."[14] Local cooperation therefore was necessary not only to fight radical elements in Iraqi and Egyptian society, but also to curtail the influence of Britain's allies in the region.

The British saw American economic penetration as the major outside threat to their position in Egypt. King Farouk's apparent turn towards the United States was partly a response to internal politics, because the United States seemed to offer him a way to balance the British with their support for the Wafd.[15] In the long run, however, Smart believed that "he and other Egyptians will find that America will not carry the Middle East baby. Then, if meanwhile we have adapted our policies in the Egypt-Arab world to

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[11] Minute by Smart, 17 April 1945, FO141/1011.

[12] Minute by Smart, 10 Dec. 1945, FO141/1043.

[13] Memorandum by Scrivener, 3 Aug. 1945, FO371/45923.

[14] Cornwallis to Eden, 9 Jan. 1945, FO371/45302.

[15] British officials attributed this growing American and Soviet influence partly to the success of their own wartime propaganda in support of their allies. Killearn noted that "Egyptians cannot fail to be impressed by the prominence in the news given to Russian and American armies in Germany as compared wit the minor attention given to ours. To them the picture probably is one of American and Russian colossi overwhelming Germany and then face to face with each other, Great Britain being in the background." Killearn to Campbell, 24 April 1945, FO141/1058. As Smart observed, "It is our bad luck that we should have played the major part in the first half of the war and the Americans in the second." Minute by Smart, 22 April 1945, FO141/1058.

its new conditions, we should be able to re-assert our predominance."[16] The key for Britain was to build support in Egypt so that, once the shine wore off of America in Egypt's eyes, Britain would be ready to step forward once again.

Killearn took a tough line with American intervention. He was uncompromising in his belief that Egypt was vital for Britain's defense and that Britain should defend its position in Egypt at all costs. Killearn told the American Minister to Egypt, Tuck, that while he supported Anglo-American collaboration, he drew a line at American attempts to undermine Britain's position in Egypt.[17] The United States should be welcome to play a greater role in the region, "But that does not mean, as I see it, that we should tacitly allow them to supplant us, especially in Egypt where our political and strategical interest is so great. I repeat, there should be room for us both-but not to the prejudice of our political predominance in these parts. To us it is a matter of life and death: to America something much less cogent."[18]

In addition to the threat posed by the United States and the Soviet Union, British officials also had to consider the implications of the new international organizations established after the war. These organizations presented an opportunity for Britain to achieve its goals through new means, dealing with the Middle East on a regional basis through this international mechanism. General Paget suggested that the best way to get their needs met would be through a regional organization, a Middle East Confederacy

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Killearn to FO, 4 June 1945, FO371/45921.
[18] Killearn to Cadogan, 18 June 1945, FO371/45921.

which would provide for mutual defence.[19] While this idea was ultimately rejected, the concept of dealing with the Middle East as a whole rather than with its component parts held some appeal. Bevin supported this idea, noting that "To reach the right solution of our Middle East problems it was necessary to consider the area as a single region."[20]

Killearn was highly skeptical of what would emerge from the San Francisco Conference and its implications for the British position in Egypt: "with due respect it seems indefensible to jeopardise (if such be the case) our treaty arrangements with Egypt for the safety of our imperial life-line by idealistic commitments in regard to world security which may or may not prove effective in practice."[21] Yet he also recognized that Britain could sweeten its demands for concessions by couching them in the terms of the San Francisco Conference, regionalism, and partnership: "approach to the Egyptian Government should be represented as being an attempt to carry out the idea of collective security (accepted by both Governments at San Francisco) as Anglo-Egyptian contribution to the whole scheme." He agreed with the Commanders in Chief that they should argue that troops would be in Egypt not "for purposes of internal security (even in collaboration) and not...for security of Suez Canal but are to be stationed here as part of our mutual contribution to the security of the Middle East stressing the regional aspect but only as a part of the general world scheme of collective security under the United Nations plan." Killearn also suggested that they should try to "make the mutuality of the defence arrangements that they want more apparent, even if not more real, than under the

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19 Paget, Memorandum on "A Middle East Confederacy," 20 April 1945, FO141/1059. For the debate over this idea, see Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951*, 21-22.

20 Baxter (for Bevin) to Bowker, 18 Oct. 1945, FO141/1059.

21 Killearn to FO, 11 June 1945, FO371/45921.

old treaty."[22] Cornwallis agreed that, with respect to Iraq, it would be difficult to achieve their goals "on the old unilateral imperial basis," and instead they should work towards the new international organizations envisioned in the postwar settlement and cooperate with the United States.[23]

This regional approach would allow Britain to coordinate its policy. Given the growth of the Arab unity movement, Cornwallis believed that Britain must "consider the Arab world as one, and not as various units on the map, to be handled individually or in sections by different Government departments. Our policy towards the Middle East as a whole, it seems to me, requires greater co-ordination. It may, for example, seem a small thing in London to present the King of Egypt with an aircraft and to make the Regent of Iraq pay for his. But such an incident can have serious consequences as implying favoritism."[24]

Smart, the Oriental Minister in Cairo, saw benefits to viewing the issue of Egyptian treaty revision in a regional context as it "would take the Egyptian question out of its present narrow arena of uninformed half-baked agitation and catchwords into the larger sphere of the Middle East, where particular exigencies might lose some of their violence." Yet this also implied that Britain would have to involve herself in Syria and Lebanon and change her policy of recognizing French interests there. Smart argued:

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[22] Killearn to FO, 6 Dec. 1945, FO371/46028.

[23] Cornwallis to Peterson, 19 March 1944, FO371/40079. Cornwallis had a special perspective on Anglo-American relations, having been born in the United States to an American mother.

[24] Cornwallis to Eden, Cornwallis's valedictory, 30 March 1945, FO371/45302. Albert Hourani made a similar point: "In everything which is done, Arab Asia should be seen as a unity. It should be remembered that what is done in one region of the Arab world will bear fruit in others; that work neglected or badly done in one may ruin the effect of work well done in others; and in general that so long as there is one centre of discontent in Arab Asia the whole of it will be disturbed. Therefore whatever long-term

"Syria is part of the Arab world and it is impossible to have all but Syria in the Arab world under our aegis and expect that this anomaly will work without continual friction and economic and political unrest." Citing the great Anglo-French showdown in Africa in the nineteenth century, Smart acknowledged that this would anger France, but in the long run would be worth the risk: "The French would no doubt treat this as another Fashoda, but it is not inappropriate to remember that, six years after Fashoda, the Anglo-French Entente was signed." [25]

Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Iraqi Treaty Revision

The idea of dealing with British strategic requirements in Egypt and Iraq on a regional basis was based on the assumption that, when placed within the broader context, Britain would essentially be able to slip in its demands for more troops and bases unnoticed. The details would be lost in the big picture. Yet ultimately Britain pursued the old bilateral approach, participating in drawn-out talks with both Egypt and Iraq to renegotiate the Anglo-Iraqi and Anglo-Egyptian Treaties. This effort ultimately proved unsatisfying to all parties involved. Imperialism by treaty was more difficult than anticipated in the post-war world.

The issue of treaty revision had been raised in Egypt early on in the war, and centered on two primary issues: the evacuation of British troops, and the "unity of the Nile Valley," by which they meant a union of Egypt and the Sudan. The British viewed these demands as unrealistic: Egypt could not defend itself or the Suez Canal and the

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policy is adopted should be a single policy thought out and if possible supervised from a single centre from which Arab Asia can be seen a as whole." Hourani 1943 Report.

25 Memorandum by Smart, "Egyptian Treaty Revision and Our Position in the Middle East," 5 Nov. 1945, FO141/1058. While the post-war debates over the future of Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon are

Sudan was evolving into an independent state "and must be left free to work out its own destiny."[26] Beyond these points of contention, the very terms of the 1936 treaty itself included no provision for raising the issue of renegotiation before December 1946.[27] British officials also liked to point out that when treaty revision did come about, Egypt would not be the only side with points to raise, because Britain might have demands of their own.[28]

The growing debates over internationalization in the post-war world seemed to provide a new opportunity for Egypt to call for treaty revision. Egyptian officials argued that the termination of the League of Nations made the 1936 treaty null and void, and that Britain and Egypt would have to negotiate a new treaty under the terms of the San Francisco Conference and the new United Nations.[29] Egypt was therefore trying to achieve through international channels what it could not get through bilateral negotiations. While decrying this tactic, the Foreign Office conceded that legally Egypt would be justified in calling for treaty revision on these grounds.[30]

There was a divergence of opinion between Ambassador Killearn and his Oriental Minister, Walter Smart, as to an appropriate British response to these demands for treaty revision. Smart believed that British military authorities, in their post-war planning, were

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outside the scope of the present study, they were very much in the minds of both British and Arab officials during these negotiations over Egypt and Iraq.

[26] Minute by Scrivener, 20 March 1945, FO371/45919.

[27] The Treaty included provisions for renegotiation in December 1946 if both parties agreed, or revision in 1956 at the request of one party.

[28] For a concise summary of the debate on both sides, see the Minute by Scrivener, 20 March 1945, FO371/45919.

[29] Killearn to FO, 2 May 1945, and Minute by Besly, 7 May 1945, FO141/1043. Egypt ultimately used this line of argument in the official Government of Egypt call for treaty renegotiation in December 1945.

[30] FO to Cairo, 28 May 1945, FO141/1043.

out of touch with the reality of British limitations and the strength of local nationalist opposition. British military authorities proposed moving troops through Egypt in numbers beyond the treaty limits, and Smart observed that "I cannot help feeling that all this is rather in the realm of fantasy," and Egyptian acquiescence on larger troop movements would require the use of force: "Is it probable in the new world circumstances that Great Britain will be prepared to use such force?"[31] Given that force did not seem like a viable option, Smart took the side of conciliating Egypt. They should first of all decide what their minimum requirements were, and then ensure that "our requirements must be as little irksome as possible, internationally and locally. As far as Egypt is concerned, this boils down to our endeavouring to find something which the Egyptians will swallow without our being obliged to have recourse to physical force." They should therefore look into alternative arrangements such as British garrisons in Cyrenaica or Palestine and the use of Egyptian facilities without outright occupation.[32]

The Ambassador, for his part, agreed that force might be required to ensure Egyptian cooperation, but he did not share Smart's hesitation in using it. As he dramatically stated in his diary: "if retaining our predominance entails being a little rough with Egypt, I would be fully prepared to be as rough as required."[33] In Killearn's estimation, the Egyptians were getting above themselves in the post-war euphoria. He portrayed the Egyptian delegation to the San Francisco Conference as "in a thoroughly

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[31] Minute by Smart, 23 August 1945, FO141/1059.

[32] Minute by Smart, 11 May 1945, FO141/1043. As Louis points out, Britain ultimately rejected all of these alternatives in the debates over post-war strategic requirements and concluded that only Egypt could ideally meet all of its needs. See the Introduction to Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951*.

[33] Killearn Diaries, 11 May 1945.

tiresome mood, swollen headed, self conceited and elated by what I might call 'world organisation intoxication'… they seem to have got it into their heads that we, the British, were finished so far as the Middle East was concerned. That was a real big mistake which they would learn to regret here."[34]

Another challenge to the issue of treaty revision was the nature of internal Egyptian politics. The original treaty had been negotiated by a "United Front" of Egyptian parties in 1936. Killearn argued that the Wafd would reject any treaty negotiated by Nokrashi's government, and that they needed the Wafd, as the majority party in Egypt, to endorse any treaty revision.[35] Yet the chances of achieving a United Front seemed slim. The Palace would oppose bringing the Wafd into the negotiations due to the personal animosity between Farouk and Nahas, while the Wafd would oppose any negotiations in which they were not invited to participate. The Palace and Nokrashi's government did not seem ready to actually start negotiations, even though they were paying lip service to the idea, because they feared that Britain would insist on bringing the Wafd back to power as one of the conditions of talks. Smart saw this as an opportunity for Britain to stall. They should "wait and see as long as possible," and when the Egyptian government did raise the issue, they should suggest that they would only negotiate with a United Front and say "we were ready to talk when Egyptians were agreed among themselves."[36] Smart also urged restraint on the issue of treaty revisions due to the uncertain nature of Britain's actual strategic needs after the war. Citing the impact that the atomic bomb and new technology might have on Britain's strategic

34 Ibid., 4 June 1945.

35 Killearn to FO, 12 July 1945, FO371/45922.

requirements, he suggested that "It is quite possible that we shall no longer require the large strategic reserves, the enlarged Air Force set-up, the Naval arrangements at Alexandria, at any rate on the scale at present advanced by their protagonists. For all we know, the future may require only police forces to assist by their propinquity in the maintenance of security in the whole of the Middle East region."[37] Ultimately, the British military authorities concluded that these new factors would not alter Britain's strategic requirements for the Middle East.[38]

Smart wrote a series of memoranda addressing the challenges Britain faced not only in Egypt but in the wider Arab world in the post-war period. Given his long career in Egypt, his recognized expertise and the strong influence he exerted on the British Ambassador, it is worth examining his views in greater depth. With respect to internal Egyptian politics, Smart pressed the Embassy to distance itself from its policy of unconditional support for Nahas and the Wafd: "The weakness of the Wafd had always been its administrative incompetence and its abuse of the spoils of power." He often likened the Wafd to the Tammany Hall political machine of New York City, both with respect to its corruption and its mastery of patron-client relations as a means of exerting political influence. While weakened by its fall from power in 1944, the Wafd was still a force to be reckoned with in Egyptian politics: "The Wafd is the only well and widely

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[36] Memorandum by Smart, "Anglo-Egyptian Treaty," 29 Aug. 1945, FO141/1043.

[37] Ibid.

[38] As Louis notes, the Chiefs of Staff concluded that these new weapons did not alter their strategic requirements in the Middle East: "With that ingenious argument the Chiefs of Staff could carry on almost as if the atomic bomb had never been invented. It enabled them to uphold traditional principles until the assumptions could be proved false. Ultimately it was probably the weakness of the British economy and the decolonizing ethic of postwar Britain that undermined the strategic position in the Middle East as much as any intrinsic imbalance that arose from a bipolar world and possession of atomic bombs." Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951*, 29.

organize political party and its discipline is perfect. The fiat of the leader of the Wafd is, in practice, undisputed, however much individuals in the Wafd may at times murmur against it." [39] Yet Smart did not believe that Wafd support would be enough to get the country behind British demands with respect for treaty revision. King Farouk, in Smart's estimation, "though no longer perhaps so popular as before, still appears to the popular imagination as a future vedette. We cannot afford to antagonise King Farouk at this moment." If treaty negotiations broke down, the support of the King would be useful to maintain order: "the Wafd alone could not give us security as regards Treaty revision any more than the present regime; the non-Wafd opposition with King Farouk on its side would be too powerful."[40] Smart's assessment reflected a major shift in the Egyptian balance of power from the British perspective: an alliance between the Wafd and the British was no longer enough to maintain order and ensure British strategic requirements, but cooperation between Britain and the Palace offered this possibility. Given this shift, the Embassy's strong ties to the Wafd with its growing reputation for corruption and favoritism, was a political liability in post-war Egypt.

Smart felt strongly that Britain should resolve, as soon as possible, outstanding regional issues such as Palestine and the future of Syria and Lebanon, as well as clearly stating its goals for Egypt. The delay was only hurting Britain's case: "The effect of the stalling is that a free field is being left to every kind of extremist and vociferous, half-baked politician, and nationalist claims tend to become more and more unrestrained. It is essential that as soon as possible we should, however carefully, let the Egyptians know

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[39] Smart memorandum on the Wafd, 10 April 1946, FO141/1077.

approximately where they get off as regards our military requirements."[41]

Smart was well aware of the dangers inherent in Britain's alliance with the vested interests in Egypt. In an argument that echoes that of British officials in Iraq, he warned: "One of the most fundamental of our difficulties in the whole of this region is that Great Britain, by force of circumstances, is regarded as being on the side of the forces of conservation. These forces are unfortunately so blindly selfish that they resist all our efforts to induce them to get down to social reform, which is a crying need everywhere throughout the Middle East." As a result, the "elements of discontent" are "an easy prey to Russian propaganda… Unless we can appear to the masses as their champions against obviously archaic social inequities, we may eventually find ourselves co-operating with Governments which can no longer deliver to us the political goods we require."[42]

Both the Egyptian government under Nokrashi and the British were feeling the pressure for treaty revision from the Wafd and other political elements in Egypt.[43] Nokrashi was stalling due to fears that Britain would demand the return of the Wafd to power and a truly representative government as the price of negotiation; Britain was delaying because officials could not decide what exactly their military requirements were

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[40] Memorandum by Smart, "Egyptian Treaty Revision and Our Position in the Middle East," 5 Nov. 1945, FO141/1058.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid. In the memo, Smart also reveals an acute awareness of his own perspective writing from Egypt: "It is possible that our requirements in other parts of the world and our general policy in favour of universal co-operation as against zones of influence may make it impossible for us to deal with the Middle East on lines which would secure our positions in the Middle East on the basis of Anglo-Middle Eastern co-operation. In that event we should, of course, have to resign ourselves to abandonment of our exclusive positions in the Middle East and allow this region to develop on a more international basis. But this is a problem outside our local competence."

[43] For example, the Egyptian "Committee of Elder Statesmen," which consisted of the leaders of Egypt's main political parties, issued a call for treaty revision, the removal of British troops, and the

for the region, although they ultimately decided to accept treaty revision in principle.[44] Scrivener suggested that they should focus their attention on the King and take advantage of his fear of growing Soviet intervention in Egypt by pointing out that treaty revision could weaken Britain's ability to protect Egypt and open the door for greater Russian encroachment: "His Majesty would, in consequence, be well advised to ensure that his Government abandoned their policy of legalistic sabotage of Anglo-Egyptian collaboration, and concentrate instead on working with His Majesty's Government in the framework of the new organization."[45]

King Farouk also recognized that an agreement with Britain might be the best way to break the impasse over treaty negotiation, presenting his proposals to Britain through Amr, the Egyptian Ambassador in London. Amr first restated the three-legged stool diagram from the Palace perspective: "The political forces in Egypt are centred round three points, the British representative, the Palace and the people. In the recent past the British have supported what they thought was the popular party (but what was in effect a band of corrupt place-seekers) against the will of the people and the counsel of the Palace. There is no reason why this triangle of forces should not be resolved." King Farouk's proposal for resolving this conflict was "a gentleman's agreement with the British Government that they would lend him their moral support and withdraw it from Nahas Pasha… In return for our moral support of the King…His Majesty would guarantee to take the necessary steps to safeguard our vital defence interests in Egypt"

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unification of Egypt with the Sudan in September 1945. Extract from *Le Journal d'Egypte,* 24 Sept. 1945, FO371/45926.

[44] Minute by J.G. Ward, 5 Oct. 1945 and Minute by Scrivener, 5 Oct. 1945, FO371/45926.

[45] FO to Cairo, 28 May 1945, FO141/1043.

and implement the requested social reforms.[46] This proposal of rapprochement between Britain and the Palace would allow Britain to meet its strategic requirements while the King could avoid having to call a United Front government to negotiate for treaty revisions.[47]

The Foreign Office was willing to consider this idea. Scrivener noted that giving the King their support would make him more willing to apply pressure to Nokrashi's government. The Egyptian Department had, all along, supported "'quit the arena' as soon as the exigencies of war allowed us to do so…. In Egypt the Monarchy has prestige and it has continuity. Let us give it a rum. It is susceptible to pressure; and if it proves in fact hopelessly reactionary we can think again."[48]

Britain, the Egyptian Palace, and the Egyptian Prime Minister were in agreement that treaty negotiation should be stalled, but the issue was propelled forward by the Wafd party, now out of power, and the opposition parties. In July 1945 Nahas, as President of the Wafd, sent a statement to Killearn reflecting his party's demands for treaty revision. After describing Egypt's loyalty to Britain during the war and contribution to the war effort, it states that the ending of hostilities provides an appropriate opportunity for Egypt to exert her independence and calls for treaty revision before the Peace Conference.

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[46] Memorandum by R. Howe for Cadogan, 10 Sept. 1945, FO371/45925.

[47] Killearn, in responding to this proposal, defended his support for Nahas based on the fact that the Wafd had stood by Britain in the summer of 1942. He restated his belief that the Wafd was still the majority party and was regaining while out of power the popularity it had lost between 1942 and 1944. Killearn strongly objected to the accusation that the Embassy had influenced Egyptian elections. He believed that Farouk did genuinely want to cooperate with Britain: "Alamein was strong medicine; and King Farouk has the wit to realise how much he must now depend on us. I believe he is now genuinely anxious 'to play ball' with us." Yet he was also losing faith in Amr as an intermediary. While he had been useful in Cairo, in London he had turned into "an 'adulatory' royal sycophant." Minute by Killearn, 20 Sept. 1945, FO371/45925.

[48] Minute by Scrivener, 7 Oct. 1945, FO371/45925.

Nahas offered a thinly veiled threat, implying that Britain's position was based more on the goodwill of Egyptians than the strength of her military presence: "The experiences of the present war have indeed clearly proved that Great Britain relies in such circumstances on the friendly sentiments and loyalty of the Egyptian people. This is indispensable and cannot be replaced by the presence of a limited number of British Forces either in Egyptian towns or on the banks of the Canal. The bonds of friendship endure and are more effective than these material manifestations which are limited in strength and utility."[49]

The strength of public sentiment in Egypt in favor of treaty revision became evident in the debates on this issue in the Egyptian Chamber of Deputies and Senate in October 1945. One representative noted that the issue went beyond the demands for British troop evacuation and the Sudan: "that it was necessary to add to these two issues freedom for the Egyptian government to legislate without any foreign intervention in order to attain national prosperity…in order to attain the freedom to legislate, we do not need to adopt an attitude of weakness but to speak to the English in a language that they will understand."[50] Prime Minister Nokrashi faced similar criticisms in the Senate, where Senators compared the situation to that after World War I, when Zaghlul taught them that "the remaining question between us and England are not the domain of the government but belong to the entire nation." Nokrashi agreed with them on the issue of national

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[49] Nahas to Killearn, translated from Arabic, 23 July 1945, FO141/1043.

[50] Aly el Khochkhani quoted in "Les debats à la Chambre sur les aspirations nationals," *Le Journal d'Egypte*, 16 Oct. 1945, FO371/45927.

aspirations, but did not feel able to outline his policy at that time.[51] Nokrashi's hesitation to call for treaty negotiation and his unwillingness to publicly articulate his stance on the issue threatened to undermine his government. It is significant that the push for renegotiation did not come from the Palace, the Egyptian Government, or the British, but rather from the various Egyptian political parties who were able to manipulate events to eventually force renegotiation.

The push for treaty revision accelerated in December 1945, when Makram issued an ultimatum to the Prime Minister demanding that a delegation be formed immediately to proceed to London and undertake negotiations.[52] Britain, however, preferred to undertake preliminary informal talks between Killearn, British military commanders, and Nokrashi in the hopes that they might hammer out the difficult issues in advance:

> If we run straight into heavy weather, we can think again; but once we are committed to a delegation, any deadlock will be brought into the open with possibly disastrous consequences. If we can sell the confederacy idea to whoever is Prime Minister, we may be a long way on the road to success, and can then go on to the Sudan. When both these difficulties look like being overcome (or at least worth negotiating about), we can proceed with formal negotiations here or in Cairo.[53]

Makram again pushed the issue when his newspaper published an alleged note from the Egyptian government to Britain calling for treaty revision and the evacuation of British troops.[54] The Note was officially presented on December 20th. It based its call for

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[51] "Le Senat appuie les revendications nationales…" *Le Journal d'Egypte* 17 Oct. 1945, FO371/45927.

[52] C in C ME to War Office, 1 Dec. 1945, FO371/45928.

[53] Minute by Scrivener, 4 Dec. 1945, FO371/45929.

[54] Killearn to FO, 16 Dec. 1945, FO371/45929. Amr, the Egyptian Ambassador to Britain, admitted that he had such a note to present to the Foreign Office but was holding it for Bevin's return to London. However, the publication of the note before it had been formally presented led to a protest by Britain at this "breach of international courtesy." FO to Cairo, 17 Dec. 1945, FO371/45929.

treaty revision on the fact that the 1936 treaty had been negotiated in specific circumstances: the Italian presence in Libya and the impending war. Egypt had only accepted the treaty "under the pressure of necessity" and had always viewed it as a temporary measure: "If Egypt accepted the treaty, with all that it implied in the way of restrictions on her independence, it was because she knew that they were of a transitory character and were destined to disappear at the same time as the circumstances and events by reason of which they had been agreed to." World War II had "exhausted the principal objectives of the treaty" and it was now necessary to revise it in light of the changing "international situation." The continued presence of British troops in Egypt was "wounding to national dignity." The note called for Britain to set a date to receive an Egyptian delegation in London to negotiate the treaty, and stated that the issue of the Sudan would be included in these discussions.[55]

The British government did not reply until January 25, 1946. The British reply stated that, in contrast to the Egyptian position, Britain concluded that one of the lessons of the war was "the essential soundness of the fundamental principles on which the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 was based." But Britain agreed to enter into talks before the time frame proposed in the treaty and instructed Killearn to hold "preliminary conversations" in Egypt in order to "place it on a footing of full and free partnership, as between equals in the defence of their mutual interests, and with full respect for the independence and sovereignty of Egypt."[56] The British military authorities agreed to this

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55 "Translation of the Note communicated by the Egyptian Ambassador to the Foreign Office," 20 Dec. 1945, FO371/45929.

56 Bevin, British reply presented to the Egyptian Ambassador to London on 26 Jan. 1946 (dated 25 Jan. 1946), FO371/45929.

early treaty revision, despite their reservations, because it would allow them to conduct bilateral negotiations with Egypt whereas if they waited they would have to work through the new international organization.[57]

While Britain was, on paper, committed to negotiations as between equals, this remained a façade. As one Foreign Office official observed: "we have got to make it seem more like an equal partnership than it seemed before. The political desirability of this seems to be held strongly by our people in Egypt, and I expect their advice is good, though it is rather difficult to find terms to give effect to the idea."[58] The Chiefs of Staff recounted that Killearn:

> recently expressed the opinion that the Egyptians did not know what they really wanted, and the present agitation was mainly political and nationalist…It seems likely, therefore, that we shall in any revision of the treaty, have to make concessions to Egyptian nationalism which will enable the Egyptian Government to save face with its own people and avoid our appearing to infringe Egyptian sovereignty. [59]

While the political rhetoric expressed the ideal of equal relations, for British officials maintaining British interests remained the paramount consideration.

As the end of the war approached, Iraq also raised the issue of treaty revision. The British saw a connection between the call for treaty revision in Iraq and the earlier calls in Egypt. As the Iraqi Prime Minister, Pachachi, informed Ambassador Stonehewer Bird: "The reason people started talking of treaty revision, he went on, was that the matter had

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[57] Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, 28 Dec. 1945, FO371/46028.
[58] Minute by W. Beckett, 2 Jan. 1946, FO371/45929.
[59] Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, 28 Dec. 1945, FO371/46028.

been raised in Egypt, and it was thought that what was done in Egypt should automatically be done here."[60]

Given the important role that British diplomatic representatives and advisers played in Iraq as the means through which Britain exerted influence after the Mandate, it is perhaps unsurprising that the first treaty issues raised by the Iraqis dealt with these officials. Iraq requested an end to the permanent precedence of the British Ambassador in Baghdad along with raising the status of its own diplomatic representation in London to an Embassy, and an end to the stipulation in the treaty that Iraq should hire British advisers for any posts unless a suitable candidate could not be found.

The tension between Britain's desire to maintain its position in the Middle East, the growing American and Soviet rivalry for influence in the region, and nationalist demands for greater autonomy are exemplified in the debates over diplomatic representation that erupted during the second half of the war. Britain's allies, the United States and the Soviet Union, began pressing for the raising of their Legations to Embassies during the later war years and an end to diplomatic precedence for Britain. [61] For British officials, this was more than a mere symbolic gesture; it went to the very heart of British prestige in both countries. Killearn strongly objected to these changes; Cornwallis was willing to recognize the raising of the US Legation in Baghdad to an Embassy but warned against abandoning Britain's traditional privileges as protected in the Treaty: "I feel that if we are to protect adequately our major interest in this region in post war future we will need help and cooperation both of United States and of Russia

60 Stonehewer Bird to Eden, 7 May 1945, FO371/45302.

and that the former in particular must recognize increase in value of political economic stake in Middle East generally means assumption of new responsibilities."[62] While Britain allowed the establishment of a Soviet Legation in both countries Britain informed the State Department that "in view of the responsibility which we have undertaken for the defence of Egypt and Iraq" Britain preferred to retain its precedence in both countries, and the United States agreed to maintain their representation at the level of Legations.[63] Both Stonehewer Bird and the Foreign Office officials agreed to concede the issue of diplomatic representation in London, but held firm on the issue of British advisers. Stonehewer Bird agreed with his predecessor, Cornwallis, that: "it is the Advisers and other British servants of the Iraqi Government who are the real vehicles of our influence here. We should do all we can to maintain them."[64]

The call for treaty revision within Iraq grew through the summer, and to the requests regarding advisers and diplomatic representation was added a new demand that struck at the very core of British interests in Iraq: to end Britain's rights to maintain air bases in Iraq "on the ground that these bases are inconsistent with the sovereign independence of Iraq."[65] At the same time, British military officials were hoping to station ground troops in Iraq in addition to the RAF bases. Here again, Britain saw the

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61 Under both the Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Iraqi treaties, the British Ambassadors in both countries enjoyed perpetual precedence and recognition as the senior member of the diplomatic corps.

62 Minute by Mayer, 29 April 1944 and Cornwallis to FO, 26 April 1944, FO371/40082.

63 Minute by Holt, "Revision of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty," 9 Aug. 1945, FO371/45303.

64 Stonehewer Bird to Eden, 7 May 1945, and Minute by Campbell, 15 June 1945. Baxter noted that "The only reason why we have hesitated on this point is Lord Killearn's strong personal disinclination to abandon his own right of precedence at Cairo. If we abandon our rights of precedence at Bagdad, we shall find it difficult to maintain our rights of precedence in Cairo." Despite these reservations, he felt they should give in on this issue with respect to Baghdad. Minute by Baxter, 14 June 1945, FO371/45302.

65 Minute by Holt, "Revision of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty," 9 August 1945, FO371/45303.

hand of Egypt in this call for treaty revision: "Thus the Iraqi attitude is probably very largely a manifestation of their wish to support Egypt's case for treaty revision. The Iraqis and Egyptians doubtless feel that if they both shout together for treaty revision, they are more likely to secure a hearing…Their next step will probably be to mobilise the Arab League."[66]

Intervention through Experts

The fall of Churchill's wartime government and the election of the new Labour government had a significant impact on Britain's policy towards the Middle East.[67] This policy is perhaps best personified by the conclusions reached at a meeting the new Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, had with the Heads of Mission in the Middle East during September 1945 in London.[68] Bevin "charged the Conference with the duty of surveying the whole field of foreign policy in the Middle East on the basis that His Majesty's Government would continue to assert their political predominance in that area and their overriding responsibility for its defence." He also introduced his new policy for dealing with the Middle East: "we should broaden the base on which British influence rests and to this end should develop an economic and social policy that would make for the prosperity and contentment of the area as a whole…we should do all that we could to

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66 Minute by Baxter, 25 July 1945, FO371/45303.

67 For British policy in the Middle East under the Labour Government, see Wm. Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951.* Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser also covers this period in her work, *Britain and the Egyptian Nationalist Movement 1936-1952*, chapter 3, but she views Bevin's policy as one of continuity with earlier periods, rather than as a new departure.

68 Among other things, they discussed admitting women to the diplomatic and consular services at this meeting. Killearn recorded: "All of us advised against it in Moslem countries." Killearn Diaries, 18 Sept. 1945.

promote the social betterment of the people of the region."[69] Many of the decisions made at this meeting reflected this new approach. Communist propaganda, for example, could best be countered by addressing the social and economic concerns that made it an attractive ideology in the region. The lifting of wartime economic controls could lead to greater economic rivalry with the United States in the region, and therefore the conference asserted that Britain "should not make any concession that would assist American commercial penetration into a region which for generations has been an established British market" except in the area of oil.

The meeting tried to address two critical concerns: how to maintain influence in the Middle Eastern states at a time when local nationalist movements were calling for less foreign intervention, and how to ensure that the sterling balances built up by these states during the war were not used to cause further economic problems in Britain. Economic and social initiatives would benefit both the Middle Eastern states themselves and Britain: "The raising of the standard of living of the masses of the people of the Middle East will promote internal stability in the region, and increase its importance as a market for imported goods." At the same time, they also had to control demands for the repayment of the sterling balances: "If we take an undue initiative in drawing up, and recommending to the Middle East Governments, a plan of large-scale economic development there is a danger that we may find ourselves in all of these embarrassments." Britain should therefore provide technical advisers to encourage these states to use their sterling balances wisely and in a way that took account of Britain's

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[69] Baxter (for Bevin) to Bowker, 18 Oct. 1945, FO141/1059.

postwar economic limitations.[70] The committee agreed to leave the question of Palestine for later, and to allow the Chiefs of Staff to make decisions regarding defense, although they did recognize that defense was best dealt with in the framework of Britain's "general policy towards the region."[71]

As part of Bevin's plans for the post-war Middle East, Britain would provide technical experts to local governments. These experts were a crucial component of the plan: "It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the proposed policy of economic and social development in the Middle East can only succeed if it is based on an adequate supply of first-rate scientific and technical advice."[72] This proposal faced a number of logistical problems: how to locate the necessary experts, convince their employers to release them for short-term missions, make them available to Middle Eastern governments, and ensure that they were well qualified and suitable for work in the Middle East. The meeting proposed to create a bank of available experts in fields of "agriculture, health, labour, public works, engineering, finance etc.." The mechanism for exerting this influence in the economic and commercial sphere would be a new Middle East Office, which would act as a successor to the Minister of State's office.[73] This office

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[70] The sterling balances proved to be a real point of contention between Egypt and Britain. When Churchill suggested that some of the sterling balances be canceled as a mark of Egyptian gratitude for British protection during the war, Sidky Pasha replied that "Mr. Churchill overlooked the fact that if Egypt was saved it was due to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 which changed Egypt into a big land, air and naval base for the Allied Forces and thereby paved the way to victory." Cutting from the *Egyptian Gazette*, 17 Dec. 1945, FO371/45929.

[71] Baxter (for Bevin) to Bowker, 18 Oct. 1945, FO141/1059.

[72] Ministry of War Transport, quoted in Appendix B, "Provision of Experts," Baxter (for Bevin) to Bowker, 18 Oct. 1945, FO141/1059.

[73] Given this change, Killearn reflected back on his relations with the various Ministers of State: "With Oliver Lyttleton it had gone remarkably smoothly, with Casey a little less so, with Walter Moyne it could not have been easier or more helpful, with Ned Grigg it had been quite all right once one realised that

would serve as the headquarters for the proposed "nucleus" of technical experts who would be available to consult with Middle Eastern governments.[74]

The policies of the Labour government seemed to offer opportunities for a new policy of reform in the region, and coincided with the determination of British officials in both Egypt and Iraq to promote social reform. Bevin's proposed policy worked well with Killearn's own vision in some respects: in November 1945 Killearn stated his goal in his relations with the Palace as: "to keep His Majesty as keen as possible on Social Reform. For which purpose I should like to see quite informal meetings so that the brains of Embassy experts could be picked and utilized to the full."[75] Yet the implications of this policy were not lost on the Egyptians—Egyptian politicians compared Bevin's new policy of social reform to Cromer's policies towards the Egyptian fellah: "Both policies, it is suggested, should be regarded as cover for British political aims."[76]

Thompson, the Charge d'Affaires at the embassy in Baghdad, expressed his support for the recommendations that arose from the conference with Heads of Mission because

> it referred to the 'financial, economic and social' needs of the area in question. Too long, it seems to be, have we refrained in our official pronouncements from registering any interest whatever in the well-being of the ordinary inhabitants, the countless little people, in countries such as this. Now that we have started on this path of

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his technique was to write a series of Round Table articles on great subjects." Killearn Diaries, 14 Nov. 1945.

74 Minute by Bowker, 19 Nov. 1945, FO141/1059.

75 Cairo to FO, 28 Nov. 1945, FO141/1005. Killearn had a favorable first impression of Bevin: "He is energetic,...and has progressive ideas about things in general and the M.E. in particular. I liked him." Killearn Diaries, 5 Sept. 1945.

76 Killearn to Bevin, quoting an article in the Egyptian newspaper *Rose-el-Youssef*, 17 Dec. 1945, FO371/45929. Rather than admitting that there was some truth to the accusation, Killearn, in commenting on this article, explained that "This is a good example of the workings of the Egyptian mind--or at least certain sections of it. An ulterior motive is seen in everything: and even the new phrase of 'partnership' has been looked at askance by certain organs of the local press."

emphasising our concern with public welfare, let us continue bravely ahead, for here is one way of promoting a growing and necessary appreciation of the progressive element in British policies. By emphasising the modernity of our thought and action, we can influence in our favour the many, still largely unorganised and inarticulate, who to-day in Iraq seek a better life for their fellows.[77]

By being agents of change rather than conservatism in Iraq, the British could seize this popular sentiment in support of reform from the Russians. From the Embassy's perspective, Bevin's new policy for the Middle East complemented their own sense of idealism and responsibility for reform in Iraq. Stonehewer Bird, warning of the "disruptive forces" at work in Iraq, suggested that "It is of great importance that Great Britain should recover her reputation as a leader of material progress. Practical assistance in recruiting technical experts, training Iraqi technicians and craftsmen (the latter are still almost entirely lacking in Iraq), together with judicious advice upon internal problems and wide distribution of carefully chosen propaganda, appear to be the right methods, and these are being assiduously applied."[78]

Yet to the British, this question of social reform was closely tied to the provision of experts. In their estimation, Egypt and Iraq could not and would not implement the reforms on their own, and experts were required to provide guidance. As the Minister of State's office declared in 1944, "Both British interests and the interests of the Middle East Governments require the stiffening of the indigenous Middle East administrations by British officials of high quality."[79] This assumption was only reinforced by local governments that used the absence of experts as an excuse to postpone reforms. The Iraqi

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[77] Thompson to Bevin, 26 Sept. 1945, FO371/45295.

[78] Stonehewer Bird to Bevin, 1945 Annual Review, 4 March 1946, FO406/84.

Prime Minister, Hamdi al Pachachi, informed Cornwallis that "the slowness of the progress in public works, particularly irrigation projects, was largely due to the lack of experts, and indeed I fear this is only too true. Not only for technical spheres, but for such things as medicine and supplies, great difficulty has been encountered in responding to Iraqi requests for British officials."[80]

While British officials were generally agreed on the necessity of providing good British advisers, they still faced the challenge of how to make these positions appealing. The fact that advisers were generally employed by the Iraqi Government was a real liability, as it made officials dependent on the goodwill of the government in power for their appoint. This limited their objectivity and ability to give useful advice. Lyon, in assessing the challenges facing British advisers in Iraq, noted that after the termination of the Mandate British officials who had been working for the Iraqi government found themselves "unmarketable" and facing the prospect of losing their positions "in the slump years" of the 1930s and "They therefore sank to the category of invertebrates…For the most part, they have been turned into yes-men." Lyon suggested that the only way to remedy this situation would be for British officials to be part of the British mission through the Embassy, ending their dependence on the whims of the local government for their job security.[81]

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79 Croft, Office of Minister Resident Cairo to David Scott, FO, 19 Oct. 1944 encloses a memorandum "Employment of British Officials by Middle East Governments," 19 Oct. 1944, FO371/40029.

80 Cornwallis to Eden, 15 Jan. 1945, FO371/45302.

81 Undated paper by Lyon enclosed in Cornwallis to Brigadier Clayton, 15 Jan. 1944, FO371/40041.

British officials also had to be "of high quality." [82] As the Iraqi Minister of Finance, Saleh Jabr, informed the Embassy in Baghdad: "that it was the general wish of all those who shared his views to rely upon the British for all such expert assistance. But they must have real 'experts.' Iraq could not afford the luxury of employing Britons just because they were British…There had been, he added, much criticism among younger Iraqis particularly of some of the British who had been here 'since the last war.'" The issue was one of quality, not quantity, and the Embassy saw this as an issue of British national prestige: "nothing does us more harm than to inflict mediocrities on these people. The old game of 'passing the buck'-that is, of seizing the opportunity provided by a vacancy abroad of ridding one's department or firm of some unwanted individual…reacts lamentably on British interests." [83] It was hoped that Bevin's plan for the Middle East Office would address some of these concerns.

Bevin's policy, as devised in London, was a new departure for British relations with Middle Eastern states. Yet the principle of using British officials and advisers, in this case cloaked in the guise of technical experts, had a long genealogy. Britain sent advisers in the fields of finance, education, and agriculture to the region during World War II to address specific concerns, in addition to the long-serving British advisers within the Iraqi government. The Political Advisers in the provinces were themselves a new incarnation of the British administrators of the Mandate period. British officials foresaw

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82 Croft, Office of Minister Resident Cairo to David Scott, FO, 19 Oct. 1944 encloses a memorandum "Employment of British Officials by Middle East Governments," 19 Oct. 1944, FO371/40029.

83 Thompson to Eden, 2 Aug. 1944, FO 371/40063.

the ongoing need for these advisers, and the special role they could play in maintaining Anglo-Arab relations, long before Bevin's policy was formulated. It is worth tracing the evolving wartime debates about British experts, broadly defined, and quoting at length from some of these debates about the role of these experts in ensuring good local administration while also promoting Britain's own aims. They reflect a sense of continuity between the war and post-war periods, shed light on the ongoing debates about good administration and the nature of British informal imperial influence and intervention, and provide useful case studies of Orientalism in an official context.

While the Political Adviser system was established in 1941 to meet Britain's immediate wartime need to fight Axis influence in Iraq and establish ties with tribal leaders, it was also part of a larger, long-range plan to provide area experts for the post-war period. Most of Britain's military and diplomatic experts on Iraq started their careers in the country during the British Mesopotamian campaigns of World War I and the post-war Mandate period and were approaching retirement age, and nothing had been done to train replacements. British officials were already feeling the effect of a shortage of qualified experts during the war. Having recruited all available candidates from the military, the Iraqi Government, and the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), Cornwallis wrote in December 1941 that "Our supply of local experts is exhausted and I am still looking for an Assistant Political Adviser to fill a vacancy."[84]

This acute need was felt not only from the top, but also by the men in the field. One Political Adviser wrote to Cornwallis that the Iraqi government would have trouble keeping power after the war, and the tribal chiefs were demanding more "British

Mufettishin" (inspectors): "One foresees at the end of the war the I.G. begging the old hands to stay on to help them out. I do not think the old hands will do so. It appears to me that we should be doing something to train suitable candidates in the intervening period. Such candidates would also be of considerable use in the political organisation during the war."[85] He suggested that they recruit volunteers from the army with Arabic skills and assign them as additional assistants to the Political Advisers to serve as trainees. Cornwallis requested eight additional men to train as Political Advisers, justifying them not only on the basis of the important work they could do in wartime, but also to prevent a shortage of experts after the war.

The success of the Political Adviser system in Iraq led the Commander-in-Chief, India to examine the possibility of implementing a similar system in Iran, and the Minister of State was interested in establishing a Political Adviser organization in Syria.[86] Lyttelton proposed selecting 20 men with prior military experience in the region who would receive training and then be posted with political officers in Syria, Transjordan, Palestine, and Iraq. The candidates "should be under thirty, and apart from sound education, should posses [sic] common-sense, self-reliance and adaptability" and willing to learn the local language.[87] The fact that the British military was willing to commit scarce human resources to expanding the Political Adviser system in Iraq and duplicating

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84 Cornwallis to Clayton, 7 Dec. 1941, FO 624/25.

85 Aston to Cornwallis, 29 Oct. 1941, FO 624/25.

86 Minute by Crosthwaite, 9 Dec. 1941, FO 371/27082 and Baxter to C.G.L. Syers (Treasury), 24 Dec. 1941, FO 371/27082.

87 Lampson to FO from Minister of State, 27 Oct. 1941, FO 371/27059. While GHQ ME approved the Minister of State's proposal for 20 trainees, implementation was held up in December 1941 pending the establishment of a British military plan for Syria. Armstrong to Crosthwaite, 5 Dec. 1941, FO 371/27059.

it in other areas reflects not only the success of the program, but also British assumptions that they were in Iraq for the long term and that Iraq's need for British advisers would continue well beyond the end of the war.

British officials also looked into other proposals to ensure a steady supply of advisers for the post-war Middle East as a means of maintaining British prestige and presence. This issue arose during the Middle East War Council conference in May 1943, and one proposal put forth by an Embassy official in Baghdad was "a pool of young men with different technical qualifications who could be systematically educated for service in the Middle East." While these men would have very specialized technical skills in areas such as irrigation, they would be given broad training in the languages and cultures of the region as a whole so that they would "not have to acquire that knowledge in a haphazard manner" on the spot—they would be systematically trained beforehand. This training would also qualify them to serve throughout the region rather than in just one country, and address what the author saw as an important shortcoming of the current system, that officials were usually unfamiliar with conditions in other parts of the region. The British viewed advisers as a means of maintaining influence, not just offering expertise: "we should make the fullest use of every British official who served here. Through them we could exercise that control which, it is agreed by everyone, we ought to exercise but are debarred from doing by the terms of treaties of alliance and other instruments of independence." These officials would not need actual "executive power" to wield this influence, they "need only be advisers," as long as they had "the right sort of

personality."[88] These discussions about post-war personnel reveal that the British assumed they would have an even greater influence and interest in the Middle East after the war, and that advisers were the best means of maintaining this influence under the façade of local independence.

Cornwallis was not the only one calling for a new generation of British officials to serve in the Middle East.[89] Albert Hourani, in his 1943 report on Arab nationalism, suggested that one way to address anti-British sentiment in Arab countries would be to provide extensive training to British officials. This training would not only provide the information they needed to succeed in their posts, but also give them a sense of mission: "to give young officials sufficient understanding of Arab history, culture and society and of the Islamic religion; to make them conscious of the Arab problem as a single problem which must be ever present in their minds as the background of their work; and to help

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88 Minute by A.S. Halford, Second Secretary, 27 July 1943, FO 624/34.

89 Glubb Pasha put in a call for more experts as well. In a 1943 note that looked ahead to the post-war peace conferences, he analyzed the personnel problem in the region. On the one hand, effective advisers could play an important role in exerting British influence in the Middle East: "Arabs are individualists and…their attitude to the British Government is more affected by the personalities of individual Englishmen they know, than by the policy of the government." On the other hand, he blamed Britain for failing to take new recruits into the system of administration in the Middle East, leading to a shortage of suitable candidates, as well as for neglecting to address the lack of job security for these officials. His comments on "Northern Arabia," within which he included Iraq, provide insight into the dilemmas and inherent contradictions of indirect influence: "We are not direct administrators, yet we must watch every detail of the administration, any weakening of which may cause a collapse in which we shall be vitally interested. The disastrous results of trying to deal with those countries on the lines of conventional diplomacy were made apparent in Iraq from 1935 to 1941. On the other hand, to attempt to run the administration by direct methods would provoke intense resentment. Thus we find ourselves obliged to exercise a dominating influence in the internal administration, but by indirect methods, and behind the mask of conventional diplomacy. Experience has shown that professional diplomats and professional administrators are equally at a loss, when transplanted suddenly to one of these 'indirect control' appointments." To remedy this situation, he proposed the creation of a Levant service on the basis that: 1) "the system of indirect control which has grown up in the Middle East since 1918 is a new and specialized profession" and 2) "the Arab mind deals more in individuals than in policies. The British government on the other hand has in the past devoted its care almost entirely to policy, leaving the selection of officials to chance." He supported the creation of a Middle East Centre as a means of providing refreshers for experienced officials, ensuring "unity of doctrine," and encouraging a sense of mission

them to know the Arabs as human beings before they come to deal with them as the raw material of their professional activity." These new officials, however, should be differentiated from their predecessors in being true professionals: "What is most important of all, these men must have more than a romantic's or a dilettante's interest in the Arabs; the destiny of the Middle East and of Great Britain in the Middle East must be for them a profound moral problem worthy of their life's devotion." To achieve these ends, he suggested the formation of "an institute of contemporary Arab studies, where the development of the Arab society in all its aspects is being continuously and scientifically studied, where accurate and up-to-date information is collected and made available to those who need it, and where an attempt is made profoundly to understand the problems which face the Arabs and Great Britain in her relations with the Arabs."[90] While the student interpreters of the Levant Consular Service received their training at Cambridge with a focus on the past, this new service would be focused on the contemporary situation in the region, thereby infusing cutting-edge scholarship and information into the service of British imperial interests.

Hourani's suggestions were well-received at the Foreign Office, which was already in discussion with the War Office about the founding of such a center, which would serve both civilian and military personnel needs.[91] In his proposal for this center, the Minister of State envisioned creating a "pool from which military, diplomatic and administrative demands for personnel may be met." Students would be drawn from the

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among officials. J.B. Glubb, "A Further Note on Peace Terms in the Middle East," 25 May 1943, FO371/34975.

90 Hourani 1943 Report. Hourani suggested that they use the Institute for the Orient in Rome as a model. Lascelles to Baxter, 29 April 1943, FO371/34958.

pool of Political Officers established in February 1942, OETA, and possibly the British Council, with no more than 20 students at first. They would spend six months at the center "to learn Arabic and attend lectures on geography, history, religions, culture, and politics of the Middle East as a whole, as well as on such administrative questions as are likely to be met with by them in the future," have a period of work with British organizations in the region, and then return for advanced language study. The center would be based in the Middle East so that any students unsuited to the environment could be weeded out early on.[92] Bertram Thomas, who was appointed director of the new center, had a specific vision for the types of officers who would be recruited: "Young officers of a high standard should be selected: qualifications: age limit 28, sound health, educational background, intelligence, enthusiasm, integrity, personality…Our aim should be to turn out a man who will genuinely like the country and the people-the rare Cadet can, perhaps, be inspired to think of the Middle East as a vocation rather than as a career." The standard training would produce "a common outlook," but would also equip officers to serve in the many different administrative capacities needed in the region: "Palestine and Aden call for direct administrators, Iraq for indirect, the Persian Gulf and

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[91] Minute by Hankey, 24 June 1943, FO371/34958.

[92] Note on "Formation of an Arab Centre in the Middle East" by the Minister of State R.G.C., undated, enclosed in Armstrong, Offices of the War Cabinet to Baxter, 25 May 1943, FO371/34958. The proposed center would provide officers to work for the Combined Intelligence Centre, Iraq, and for the Political Intelligence Centre in Cairo under the Minister of State. It therefore was part of the larger debate on the provision of intelligence and reveals the Minister of State's frustration with the quality of intelligence he was receiving from the Embassies. One official noted Casey's reasons for proposing the centre: "Diplomatic Missions and Colonial Governments in the Middle East (which would be the natural source for your political intelligence) are in fact unable to provide the sort of intelligence you want. You have therefore found it necessary to recruit field officers in the various Middle Eastern countries directly responsible to your Political Intelligence Centre and the difficulty of finding suitable people with knowledge of Arab affairs has led you to propose the formation of this Arab Centre." Kingsley Wood, Treasury to Casey, 3 August 1943, FO371/34960. While the proposal for the center originated in the

Transjordan for a function between advisership and diplomatic relationship. In Arabia itself it is necessary to knock at the door. The pool of officers when trained should be able to serve them all."[93]

The centre was established in Jerusalem and the first group of students came from the various branches of the military.[94] The director of the new centre, Bertram Thomas, was a respected Arabist, working in Bahrain at the time.[95] It is worth quoting his vision for the center at length because it reflects the shifting vision for the role that knowledge of the Arab world could play in imperial policy, and the shift from traditional orientalist scholarship to modern area studies. The aim of the program as he envisioned it would be "to teach Arabic as a language of modern intercourse. This object differentiates the Centre from the Faculties and Institutes in England which teach Arabic primarily as a vehicle of classical literature." Classical and modern Arabic had different vocabularies, which lent them to different areas of study: "The student of classical Arabic literature is familiar with a vocabulary and idiom dealing with religious experience, philosophic contemplation and mediaeval history. In the modern world he finds the language directed to problems of politics and economics, industry and science, journalism and social

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Minister of State's office, one Foreign Office official noted that credit for the original idea should got to the Middle East Intelligence Center (MEIC). Minute by Chapman Andrews, 8 July 1943, FO371/34959.

93 Bertram Thomas, "Note on Centre of Arab Studies," 16 April 1943, FO371/34958.

94 FO memorandum on the Arab Centre, unsigned, undated [Sept. 1944], FO371/40024. For the history of the center, see Sir James Craig, *Shemlan: A History of the Middle East Centre for Arab Studies* (London: Macmillan Press, in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1998) and Leslie McLoughlin, *In a Sea of Knowledge: British Arabists in the Twentieth Century*. Interestingly, the first Chief Instructor at the Centre was Abba Eban, who would later become the first Foreign Minister of Israel. McLoughlin, 116-118.

95 Thomas was working under the auspices of the Government of India as director of the Public Relations Bureau in Bahrain. Given the residual struggle between the Government of India and the Foreign Office for influence in the Middle East, the Government of India found that "there may be considerable advantage in having as Arab mentor one whose sympathies are engaged in the Persian Gulf and in Arabia

doctrine, Western literature and critical rationalism. The vocabulary which expresses this widening range of experience has little more than a formal relationship with the vocabulary of classical writers." The centre would fill an important niche:

> Modern Arabic, the language of the newspapers, the public meeting, the Parliamentary Debate, the diplomatic correspondence, the daily newspaper and broadcast is nowhere deliberately taught in England. The accurate observation of official life in these countries is only possible to those who learn Arabic in this modern spirit. Contact with literate Arabs-and it is they who will determine the Arab future-can hardly develop into a real intercourse except by a study of the medium in which Arab life is expressed to-day. A British representative can best observe and understand Arab life if he observes and understands what Arabs read, write and say to themselves and to the world at large. [96]

The purpose of the centre, therefore, was "severely practical-the acquisition of a living language as an aid to official and practical intercourse."[97]

Bertram Thomas also had to address the question of how much Arabic a student could reasonably learn in a year. He argued that while scholars in England studied for years the students studying modern Arabic would need less time because the ideas they would be reading about would be more familiar. An official who had studied basic Arabic structure and vocabulary "needs little except daily alertness to understand Al Ahram, an official speech or broadcast, for these express aspects of life which are congenial to a modern mind and which lie within his daily observation."[98] Study on the spot would benefit not only language acquisition, but complement the lectures as well. The lecture topics were designed to meet the practical needs of officials. History and

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deserta rather than in the fertile crescent." Sec. of State, External Dept to the Political Resident, Persian Gulf, 22 Sept. 1943, FO371/34962.

96 "Note on Centre of Arab Studies in Middle East," Bertram Thomas, March 1944, FO371/40002.

97 Ibid.

Islamic thought "are only included at all for the light they throw on modern situations…and these are to be described by men in close and actual contact with the aspects of modern life with which the Centre is concerned… the affairs of each country will be described by men actually responsible for their administration."[99] The Middle East Centre as Thomas envisioned it would provide a modern education for the next generation of British experts.

The policies laid out by Bevin in the early months of the Labour Government were, in some ways, a new departure, but there were also a number of striking continuities with earlier policy. The idea that Britain would retain treaty relations with Egypt and Iraq and would use these treaties to protect British strategic interests in the region was not a point of debate; the only question was what form these treaties would ultimately take. Influence by treaty would still be the foundation of Britain's relations with these two countries. Yet British officials also recognized that the treaties would no longer be enough to protect their interests, not only from local nationalist demands for greater autonomy, but also encroaching American and Soviet influence. Even the policy of intervention through experts had deep roots in the Middle East. The types of expertise required might have changed, but the principle remained the same. What Britain lacked in the post-war period was the necessary financial resources to follow through with this policy.

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98 Ibid. McLoughlin, who himself served as a graduate of the program, notes that Thomas's estimate of the time necessary to learn Arabic was overly optimistic. McLoughlin, 121.

99 "Note on Centre of Arab Studies in Middle East," Bertram Thomas, March 1944, FO371/40002. This document also includes a syllabus listing the topics to be covered in each lecture.

Conclusion

The closing months of World War II saw a number of important changes in British personnel in the Middle East, not least important the departure of Ambassador Cornwallis, the seasoned administrator who first arrived in Iraq with Feisal in the early days of the Mandate, in March 1945 due to ill health. A year later, Ambassador Killearn, the experienced diplomat who oversaw the transition from British High Commission to Embassy in Egypt and the negotiation of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, left Egypt to take up a position as Special Commissioner in South East Asia.[1] Before leaving their posts, both Ambassadors wrote a final dispatch, summarizing their terms of office. The language and differing points of emphasis of these documents provide insight into the mentality of the two men who directed British relations with Egypt and Iraq "on the spot" during the war years, and reflect the changes and points of continuity in the region from the British perspective.

Cornwallis had three important tasks on arriving in Iraq in 1941: to secure Britain's wartime requirements, purge Iraq of Nazi influence, and influence public opinion in favor of the Allies. He also saw himself as having a less defined fourth task: "Unofficially and in the hope of helping to create greater stability, to influence the administration as far as possible, but not to the extent of causing a crisis" that might undermine the first three priorities. Achieving these goals required building contacts within Iraqi society, something which he was well placed to do based on his extensive

personal contacts, and which he accomplished by instituting the Political Advisory system. Cornwallis considered this mission a success: "In short, it has been my endeavour to establish, through every possible means, closer relations between Iraqis of all classes and individual Britons, and I now have the satisfaction of recording that to-day Britons and Iraqis mix far more than they ever did before."

Cornwallis then reflected on the difficulties of governing Iraq. After assessing the communal divisions he concluded that "This complex society calls for the highest standard of administration." In addition to the deep-seated ethnic and sectarian divisions, effective administration was undermined by the nature of Iraqi politics. Cornwallis portrayed Iraqi politicians as "individualists," more concerned with personal loyalties and intrigues to effectively administer the country: "there are too many personal hates and rivalries, too little mutual confidence and public spirit, and too much intrigue to ensure stability and continuity, without some external influence."

Overall, Cornwallis was optimistic of the state of Iraq at the end of the war: "On the whole, therefore, in spite of much corruption and inefficiency, it is only fair to record that the Iraqis have risen well to the occasion. Everywhere public security is good and taxes are collected."[2] At the same time he was concerned that once British troops withdrew, the situation would deteriorate. Cornwallis concluded that Britain alone would be able to ensure the stability needed to reform Iraq's administration and address the

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[1] Killearn hesitated to accept this position because he feared the impression his departure would make in Egypt, with treaty negotiations approaching. He wanted to avoid the appearance that the Palace had been successful in vying for his removal. Killearn Diaries, 4 February 1946.

[2] Cornwallis to Eden, Cornwallis's valedictory, 30 March 1945, FO371/45302. Cornwallis's criteria for success in Iraq: public security and the collection of revenue, are interesting in that they reflect the basic standards of good governance for the earlier large land empires, such as the Ottoman Empire, rather than the modern nation-state which the British were, after all, trying to create in Iraq.

discontent of Iraqis, and Britain might have to do so for a long period of time, not only because of the failings of the political leaders, but because there appeared to be no alternative leaders emerging in the next generation, which Cornwallis described as "a generation of Hamlets." British interests in Iraq necessitated taking an interest in internal administration.

Given the atmosphere in the Middle East, it would be impractical to exert British influence by "tightening control by force, or of keeping permanently larger forces than those defined in the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty." But Cornwallis believed Britain could increase her influence by taking a more sympathetic approach to Iraq's grievances, ensuring a continued supply of good British officials to work within the Government of Iraq, and maintaining the personal contacts that were reestablished during the war. He called for the extension of the Political Advisory system and the Public Relations section of the Embassy into the post-war period to ensure this, to eventually be replaced by "administrative inspectors or land settlement officers in the districts" or, at the very least, more consulates. Cornwallis envisioned the Oriental Secretariat having an even greater role in Anglo-Iraqi relations in the post-war period as these wartime organizations were gradually dismantled, "and it must place high value on personal contacts."[3] He was therefore advising the extension of British influence through officials, much as had happened under the Mandate.[4]

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[3] Cornwallis to Eden, Cornwallis's valedictory, 30 March 1945, FO371/45302.

[4] Ronald Campbell's assessment of Cornwallis's tenure in Iraq as a response to this dispatch is worth quoting: "The despatch gives proof of a quiet and philosophic outlook; no tendency to activity for activity's sake: but 'dynamism' in the administrative field in order to ensure that calm decisions can be given rapid and thorough effect." Minute by R. Campbell, 10 May 1945, FO371/45302. Baxter noted that Cornwallis "has done really magnificent work during his four years' Ambassadorship in Bagdad." Minute by Baxter, 19 April 1945, FO371/45343.

Killearn began his March 1946 "swan song" by comparing the situation in Egypt in 1934, when he arrived to take up the post of High Commissioner, with that of China during the 1920s. He arrived in China in 1926 during a time of nationalist activity, but left in 1934 having helped Britain to establish good relations with the nationalist Kuomintang. This experience "was an invaluable lesson-how to get on terms with a strong nationalist movement." He then applied these lessons to Egypt:

> The problem had much similarity to that in China in 1926. A strong nationalist drive—which in Egypt, as in China, took the form of an essentially anti-British movement: but with the fundamental difference that in Egypt British interests were of a more compelling nature owing to the geographical situation of Egypt lying as she does right athwart the communications of the British Commonwealth. The complex was otherwise much the same: one had been a spectator, interested, but in a sense passive. In Egypt Fate had decreed that such passivity was not feasible. Egypt was an essential link in British world security.[5]

Killearn then shared his own narrative of Egyptian politics during his tenure. In 1934 King Fuad was still on the throne, a monarch who, although often antagonistic to British interests, "in the last resort knew full well on which side his bread was buttered." His untimely death led to the accession of his son Farouk to the throne, who, unlike his father, "did not even know where the butter came from." The young inexperienced monarch fell under the pernicious influence of Ali Maher, who convinced him to dismiss the Wafd government in 1937 and urged Egypt to pursue a policy of neutrality during the war. After the fall of the Wafd from power in 1944 and the assassination of Ahmed

[5] Cairo to FO, 6 March 1946, FO371/53288. Howe at the Foreign Office disagreed with this comparison, noting that China had only one nationalist party which "the whole of articulate China" supported, whereas in Egypt political power was more divided: "we have a very powerful other party, the King, and the balance of power is probably still on the side of the King. Both sides are trying to get us into the arena as an ally against the other." Howe then offered a restatement of the status quo policy: "I submit

Maher, Egypt, in Killearn's assessment, "rapidly deteriorated." Prime Minister Nokrashi was "nakedly the nominee of the Palace" and then in February 1946, "on the issue of Treaty Revision, things got really out of hand, and Sidky Pasha, the most corrupt if also the most able of Egyptian statesmen, found himself called to office."

This narrative brought Killearn through the end of the war and the post-war negotiations, at which point "British technique had altered—what had been regarded as both legitimate and indeed essential to repel the enemy, was no longer the order of the day." The new British policy was to be one of "nonintervention" in Egyptian affairs: "the role of the British representative was henceforth to remain aloof and let internal bickerings and political squabbles take their course as being no direct concern of ours." Killearn however, had real reservations about this new policy:

> A convincing and pleasant theory—yet in the long run is it possible? For Egypt continued to occupy the same geographical position as she always has done; she continued to be right athwart the Suez Canal and our imperial communications. Furthermore the Middle East has gained greater political and strategical importance than ever before; *and* the Arab League has been born and shows unexpected signs of growth and vigour. To sit back and remain splendidly aloof from Egyptian internal politics sounds extremely attractive in theory; and in normal conditions would be unchallengeable as politically sound. But with Egypt situated as she is, how long will that be possible? Can we allow Egypt to disintegrate and deteriorate at her own sweet will…Can we in short admit any substantial diminution of our predominance? With all deference I gravely doubt it.

Killearn concluded by warning that Britain should continue to take a real interest in Egyptian internal affairs: "Partnership is splendid but nature has ordered there must be a

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that wisdom lies in our not becoming involved in these domestic issues as long as British vital interests are not endangered." Minute by R. Howe, 16 March 1946, FO371/53288.

senior partner." The Ambassador had little hope for the future prospects of Egypt on his departure: "in my judgment the internal situation was never worse."[6]

The winter of 1946 saw not only Killearn's departure, but the untimely death of his two closest collaborators. Amin Osman, who had served as intermediary between the Embassy and the Wafd since the negotiations for the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in 1936, was assassinated while leaving the Old Victorian Club in Cairo and died of his wounds at midnight on the 5th/6th of January. The assassin, Hussein Tewfik Ahmed, was linked to other attacks on British citizens and pro-British officials, including a failed bombing attempt on Nahas's car.[7] Killearn viewed Amin Osman's death as having a potentially long-term impact on Anglo-Egyptian relations, as the Ambassador saw Amin Osman as the only person "who was in a position consistently to influence Nahas Pasha in the sense of moderation as regards Great Britain. The Wafd in opposition are henceforth under no such enlightened restraint."[8] The extent of Egyptian resentment of Amin Osman's role as intermediary with the British was demonstrated by the fact that his funeral was the scene of anti-British violence and political demonstrations, with a crowd estimated at 100,000.[9]

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6 Cairo to FO, 6 March 1946, FO371/53288.

7 The location of the assassination was significant, as the Old Victorian Club was the social club for graduates of Victoria College, which had always had a strong British affiliation. See Sahar Hamouda and Colin Clement, eds., *Victoria College: A History Revealed*. The accused murderer "in his confession, stated that he and his gang had been trained by Egyptian army officers. Ghazali thought that these officers were probably the three officers who had been interned by Nahas…the murderers were out against Egyptians friendly to Great Britain, and against Englishmen." Killearn to Bevin, 12 Jan. 1946, FO403/469. Killearn attributed the assassination not just to the fact that Amin Osman was pro-British, but also for his ties to the Wafd, citing the furor in the press in the fall of 1945 over the Abdin Palace incident and Amin Osman's role. [see Chapter 5] Killearn to Bevin, 8 Jan. 1946, FO403/469. Future Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat was one of the army officers implicated in this plot.

8 Killearn to Bevin, 8 Jan. 1946, FO403/469.

9 Killearn to Bevin, 6 Jan. 1946, FO403/469. Killearn took Amin Osman's assassination personally, and was outraged by the protests at his funeral: "It was a most disgraceful affair. The streets were thronged with people and we could hardly fight our way through the crowd…The crowd were

A month later, Hassanein Pasha, who had served as the Palace Chef de Cabinet and as intermediary between the Palace and Embassy, was killed in an accident with a British army lorry. In reflecting on this loss, the Embassy emphasized his value as intermediary, while acknowledging that his motives for this cooperation were complex:

> Hassanein Pasha's idea no doubt was that King Farouk could not go against the nationalist movement without losing ground against the Wafd. But in spite of these dubious methods, Hassanein Pasha was sincerely convinced that the stability of the Throne rested on friendship and good understanding between King Farouk and His Majesty's Government. This was his main purpose, although in details he may have been playing a double game.[10]

With the death of Hassanein and Amin Osman, Killearn's collaborative network of intermediaries was abruptly brought to an end.

While Killearn was much more pessimistic about the internal situation in Egypt than Cornwallis was about Iraq, they shared a common belief that Britain needed to be proactive in protecting its position in both countries. Their dispatches also reflect a number of shared paternalistic assumptions about the local populations with which they worked. Both portray Egyptians and Iraqis as oriental schemers, selfish, and inherently corrupt. Cornwallis, for example, observed that British officials in London tended to view Iraqis as "grasping. They are, and so are all Orientals," although he also conceded "and perhaps some Westerners too."[11] Yet this paternalism manifested itself in different forms. Cornwallis believed in the firm but gentle approach, as he explained in 1945:

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certainly hostile to the present Government. In fact it was nothing but a huge political demonstration, and I thought it absolutely disgusting." Killearn Diaries, 6 Jan. 1946.

[10] Bowker to Bevin, 19 Feb. 1946, FO403/469.

[11] Cornwallis to Eden, Cornwallis's valedictory, 30 March 1945, FO371/45302.

> We should not be weak, but we should be fair and just, and we should avoid like the plague adopting a 'tough line' just to be tough. Above all, we should avoid any action which might injure the amour-propre of the country and its citizens. They are a small people, at the beginning of their independent existence, and it is natural that they should have an adolescent sensitiveness.[12]

Killearn, by contrast, did not even credit the Egyptians with adolescent maturity, and adopted the tone of the stern schoolmaster: "The Egyptians are essentially a docile and friendly people, but they are like children in many respects. They need a strong but essentially a fair and helpful hand to guide them: 'firmness and justice' is the motto for Egypt, just as it used to be for the Chinese." [13]

Cornwallis and Killearn differed in their personal relationships with local leaders. Killearn preferred to work through intermediaries in his negotiations with both the Palace and the Egyptian government. He believed that this allowed him to maintain a façade of noninterference in local affairs, and to express Britain's interests to Egyptian officials without suffering a loss of prestige if they did not comply. Killearn wanted to know that he had British force behind him before making any formal demand. He preferred at all times to have, as he described it, "rods in pickle."[14] The stakes were too high to risk any slight to British prestige. Killearn maintained this behind-the-scenes contact primarily through the Oriental Secretariat. Publicly, he built personal contacts with local leaders through social functions at the Embassy, and was a great proponent of "dinner party diplomacy." Killearn was able to successfully manipulate the pomp and protocol of the Embassy and its powerful location in the geography of Cairo and the geography of the popular imagination of Cairenes themselves.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Cairo to FO, 6 March 1946, FO371/53288.

Killearn's labyrinthine negotiations with Egyptians through various levels of intermediaries would have seemed alien to Cornwallis. A seasoned administrator, Cornwallis preferred to speak frankly (sometimes too frankly) with local officials, and he expected his staff, both in Baghdad and the provinces, to do the same. When he did use intermediaries, they were British: the British doctor at the Palace, Edmonds at the Ministry of the Interior, or the Political Advisors in the provinces. This was reflective of the much greater British presence within the Iraqi administration itself as well as a legacy of the Mandate period. The British in Iraq did have patronage networks, in the sense that they offered "subsidies" to various politicians and tribal leaders, but this was more in the nature of buying support rather than using them as conduits for negotiations with the Iraqi Government. The function of the Oriental Secretariat in Iraq was therefore quite different.

Killearn's mission in Egypt was clear: first and foremost to maintain Britain's dominant position and prestige in Egypt and, in the immediate context of the war, ensure local cooperation on Britain's wartime aims. Cornwallis and many of his staff in Iraq had a more complex sense of mission, reflecting the longstanding tension between pragmatic imperial aims and a certain idealism. For Cornwallis, Britain's interests in Iraq were intimately bound to the interests of Iraqis, and presented both an opportunity and the quintessential imperial burden:

> Political lines of force do not change, and the laws of geography and history cannot be revoked. Our interests in this part of the world have been identical for more than 200 years. Originally those interests were selfish. They are no longer so, for, whether we will it or not, the lives and fortunes of all the inhabitants of the Middle East are as directly bound up with the maintenance of our position as were those of their ancestors with the existence of the Roman Empire. Were we to be

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[14] Killearn to Eden, 26 May 1943, Fo371/35535.

> driven from our paramount position here, the Middle East would dissolve in a chaos such as that which enveloped it when the Roman Empire decayed.[15]

Egypt and Iraq are very different countries with respect to their history, social structure, and population, to name just a few important aspects. Egypt, with its long history as a unified territory looking to Cairo as its capital stood in contrast to Iraq, a state artificially cobbled together after World War I to serve the strategic and economic interests of the European powers and inhabited by an ethnically and religiously diverse population where the provinces still played a vital role in national politics. These differences should not be overlooked, but at the same time there are some striking similarities in the experiences of both countries during the period of British formal colonial rule and later, informal influence under the rubric of bilateral treaties. It is useful to explore the similarities that emerged from these two very different environments because they shed light on the nature of British informal empire during the early twentieth century.

Egypt and Iraq shared a similar political structure during this period, with some important local distinctions. Both had weak parliamentary systems, with frequent turnover of governments. At the same time, Egypt had a strong system of political parties, whereas these parties were noticeably lacking in Iraq. During this period the military in Iraq played an active role in internal politics, and coups were common. Both governments faced frequent charges of corruption, nepotism, and inefficiency presenting Britain with the dilemma of whether to support these governments as useful collaborators or to exert pressure for administrative reform.

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[15] Cornwallis to Eden, Cornwallis's valedictory, 30 March 1945, FO371/45302.

Egypt and Iraq shared another important political feature: imported monarchies. The British response to these monarchies differed. In Egypt they came close to forcing King Farouk to abdicate in 1942, only to back down at the last minute. In Iraq the British found themselves in the position of shoring up a monarch who, while pro-British, was also weak and ineffective. The relative power of the monarch in each country varied. In Egypt the King was one leg of the three-legged stool, in a struggle for power with the Wafd nationalist party and the Embassy. In Iraq the power of the monarch was overshadowed by that of the military and the political leaders. The Regent had an important role as far as giving an air of legitimacy to the various governments installed after military coups, but he had relatively little power to influence their outcome.

On the surface, Egypt and Iraq shared the broad outline of a common narrative during World War II as well: both countries avoided declaring war and had governments that were neutral if not pro-Axis, which, in British eyes, made them a real threat to Britain's wartime priorities for the region. Britain successfully campaigned for the removal of the "Public Enemy No. 1" in each country. The crucial middle years of the war, 1941-1942, saw an unprecedented level of British intervention in the affairs of these two independent countries. In Egypt it took the form of Killearn's showdown with the King at Abdin Palace in 1942, in Iraq Britain occupied the country in response to the 1941 Rashid Ali coup. In the aftermath of this intervention, pro-British governments were put in place, led by Mustafa al-Nahas in Egypt and Nuri al-Said in Iraq.

While both governments cooperated with Britain, these leaders faced the challenge posed to any nationalist leader collaborating with an imperial power: how to balance the demands of the imperial authority that put the government in place and

ensured that it stayed there with the nationalist sentiment of the local population. The active participation of both Egypt and Iraq in the campaign for Arab unity, which culminated in the formation of the Arab League in 1945, can be largely attributed to Nuri and Nahas's need to bolster their nationalist credentials through foreign policy initiatives at the same time that they were actively collaborating with Britain on internal affairs. The nature of informal influence presented another shared dilemma to British officials in Egypt in Iraq. In both countries they were seen to be supporting the reactionary elements at a time of economic and social upheaval that led to calls for widespread reform. Both pro-British leaders were replaced in 1944, in Iraq with a cooperative but weak Prime Minister, in Egypt with a series of leaders that were increasingly wary of cooperation with Britain.

After the war, British officials brushed off the impact that the conflict had on the local populations in Egypt and Iraq. Ambassador Stonehewer Bird, Cornwallis's successor in Iraq, believed the war had little direct affect on the lives of most Iraqis: "The war impinged on them only as a state of economic stringency, and its cessation has brought no considerable relief."[16] In fact, these measures instituted by British military and civilian authorities in the Middle East as short-term solutions to the immediate needs of wartime, proved to have deep and long-lasting effects: the dramatic events of the British occupation of Iraq after the Rashid Ali coup in 1941 and repeated intervention in Egypt; Britain's staunch support for the corrupt Wafd government and the "old gang" of Iraq under Prime Minister Nuri; the long years of censorship and martial law imposed during the war; and severe economic hardship and dislocation due to the presence of

British troops. As Elizabeth Monroe commented, "All these arbitrary British acts may have been necessities of war, but they were by local standards never-to-be forgotten indignities, and all were entered on a bill of reckoning for presentation after the war."[17] While the bill was partially financial, in the form of the large sterling balances both Egypt and Iraq held at the end of the war, the biggest cost to the British would be the loss of support for Britain and the growing sense of disillusionment with the local governments that Britain had supported. Britain was indeed, as Walter Smart had warned, "inevitably associated with the conservative forces and with the opposition to the forces of renovation."[18] Even while they realized the dangers of associating with the conservative forces in Egypt and Iraq, Britain was unable to encourage internal reform or develop strong collaborative ties with more progressive groups.

Throughout the war, British officials feared a backlash immediately after the war reminiscent of the 1919 Egyptian revolution and the uprisings in Iraq against the Mandate after World War I. Both Egypt and Iraq campaigned for treaty revision and Britain unsuccessfully tried to impose its postwar strategic requirements on them within the framework of treaty negotiation. These negotiations ultimately failed because Britain underestimated the strength of local sentiment against further cooperation. The result was a postwar backlash which in Egypt took the form of widespread disturbances, protests, anti-British violence in 1946. In Iraq the response became evident in the great public outcry against the 1948 Portsmouth Treaty.

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16 Stonehewer Bird to Bevin, 1945 Annual Review for Iraq, 4 March 1946, FO406/84.

17 Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East*, 90-91. Monroe's comments on World War II are of particular interest because she spent the war working in the Middle East office of the Ministry of Information dealing with British propaganda in the region.

One of the challenges of studying informal empire is to determine when, precisely, it comes to an end. If, as Evans Pritchard suggested, the building and administration of empire was "not just a matter of flags and the crown…and red on the map," then its end was not always as simple as a declaration of independence and a formal ceremony transferring authority.[19] In Egypt, the revolution of 1952, the final withdrawal of British troops from the canal zone in 1954, and the 1956 Suez Crisis, effectively signaled the end of British influence, while the Revolution of 1958 swept away British influence in Iraq. These events also undermined the power of Britain's traditional collaborators in both countries. The "three-legged stool" in Egypt and the "old gang" in Iraq, the backbone of Britain's patron-client networks and informal empire in both countries, were finally removed from power, and British influence fell along with them.

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18 Smart memorandum on the Wafd, 10 April 1946, FO141/1077.

19 Paper by Major Evans-Pritchard of B.M.A. Cyrenaica, "A Note on the Place of Cyrenaica in the Arab World, and its future." sent to Walter Smart by Norman Anderson, Civil Affairs Branch GHQ MEF, 3 Jan. 1944. FO141/944.

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